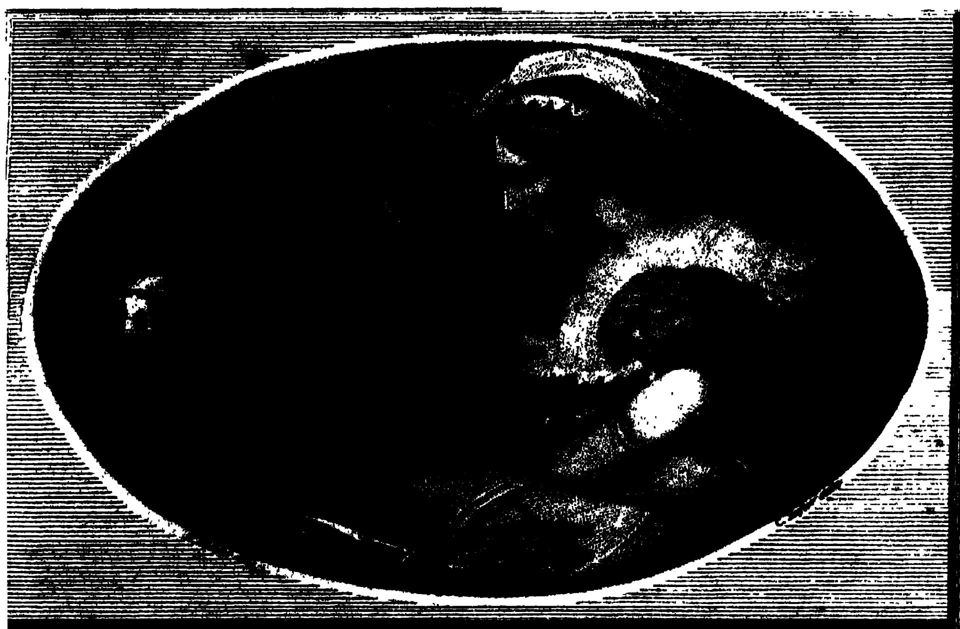


The FORTITUDE of MARGARET.

MARGARET OF ANJOU:

A POEM.

IN TEN CANTOS.



BY MISS HOLFORD,

AUTHOR OF "WALLACE, OR THE FIGHT OF FALKIRK."



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In addressing the Work I am now exposing to public opinion to my Dear Mother, I am only endeavouring to strengthen the claim it already possesses on the favour and affection of its most natural friend,—on one who, should it be doomed to encounter the frown of the world, would, in its hour of adversity, cherish it the rather with increased consideration and tenderness.

To my Mother, likewise, I consider this tribute as an appropriate acknowledgment, that from her I have imbibed and inherited the taste which has devoted me to the service of the Muse, and lent me courage to risk the trial, to which, with a mixture of hope and fear, I am looking forward.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

Oh, I do feel thee now! oh, once again
Warm gleams of rapture burst upon my brain!
Quick heaves my lab'ring breast, and to my eyes,
Lo! what strange forms in long succession rise!
Oh, Muse belov'd, I know thee now!
I feel thee glowing in my soul,
I feel thy beam upon my brow,
I feel thee thro' each artery roll
Tumultuous, fierce and bright—impatient of controul!

II.

Lead on, my Muse! For many a day,
With rapid pulse and uprais'd eye,
How have I chidden thy delay
And woo'd thee from thy sky!
Oh, thou art she who led me forth
Mid the cold mountains of the north,
Where freezing whirlwinds blow;
She, whose benign and generous glow
ur'd warmth into my heart even in those realms of
now.

III.

Lo! where old Walden's hallow'd wood
Bends its grey arms o'er Tyne's fair flood,
There, in the dark and distant years
Deep swallow'd by oblivious time,
Long pour'd a saint* his holy tears
For human care and human crime;
And, as they say, no elvish sprite,
Nor imp, nor goblin's wayward powers,

* St. John of Beverley.

Even in the darkness of the night,
May blight old Walden's bowers,
Because the holy man forbade
That aught accurs'd should tread that venerable shade.

IV.

But time rolls on; the once green spray,
Moss-mantled now, is turn'd to grey,
And, tears and painful penance paid,
The saint, long since, in dust is laid.
Well may he rest! for harder fare
Did never mortal pilgrim share.
In bitter drops he steep'd his bread,
Earth's flinty bosom was his bed;
He thought it meet thro' life to go
Frowning in voluntary woe;
And still his spirit did not bend,
He bore, unmurmuring, to the end;
For well he ween'd, man's little lot
Is but a speck, a point, a spot,
A moment's conflict bravely born,
The prize, eternal day! an ever golden morn!

V.

Well! rest his spirit! In the dell
Where once this holy man did dwell,
And where, amid this later age,
Still peeps the ivied hermitage,
Where close the social branches twin'd
O'erarch the pensive wanderer's head,
Where, seldom scar'd by human tread,
Meek, musing Silence sits enshrin'd,—
Oh, now, from whence arise the echoes rude
hat wake the slumbering scene, and break its solitude?

VI.

The dawn just risen o'er Walden's shade
Had rouz'd the warblers from their nests,
When, mid the centre of the glade,
Its ruddy light the forms betray'd
Of fearful, strange, unwonted guests!
Now, who is she, whose awful mien,
Whose dauntless step's firm dignity,
Whose high-arch'd brow, sedate, serene,

Whose eye, unbending, strong and keen,
The solemn presence hint of conscious majesty?

VII.

And, lo! she speaks! Her lips severe
Some wondrous secret sure disclose,
For that mail'd form, who listens near,
Bends mute, and fix'd, the attentive ear;
And now he frowns with aspect drear,
And now his cheek with ardour glows;
A burning glance around he throws,
As kindling into rage he shakes his glittering spear.

VIII.

But she is calm:—a peace profound
On the unruffled surface rests;
Yet is that breast in iron bound,
And fill'd with rude and sullen guests.
No female weakness harbour'd there,
Relentings soft, nor shrinking fear,
Within its centre deep abide:
The stern resolve, the purpose dire,

And grim revenge's quenchless fire,
The intrepid thought, cold, thawless pride,
And fortitude, in torture tried,—
These are its gentlest inmates now,
Tho' lawless love, they say, once heard its secret vow.

IX.

Mark well that port sublime, that peerless mien!
Then, duteous, bend to earth the vassal knee,
For she it is,—meek Henry's warrior Queen!
Unquell'd by frowning fortune's hard decree,
She stems with royal spirit, unsubdued,
Of many a stormy day the conflict rude,
And meets, with scornful brow, the wrongs of destiny.

X.

Margaret, her solemn counsel o'er,
On the arm'd warrior bends her eye,
As she would fain the thoughts explore
Which treasur'd in his bosom lie;
Clifford, with honest, ready zeal,
Thus boldly meets the mute appeal,

"Doubt not, my Queen, thy soldier's word,
While, looking on thy princely bud,
He swears to plant it with his sword,
And feed it with his blood."

XI.

If aught by gentler spirits felt
In that stern baron's bosom dwelt,
It wak'd as he beheld with joy
The promise of the royal boy,
As something like a father's sigh
Commingled with his loyalty!
Nature, when, with creative toil,
By unmark'd crowds, thou mouldest man,
The trampled earth, the common soil
Supplies the general plan;—
But when a godlike soul demands
Fit clothing from thy skilful hands,
Thy care explores the secret mine
Where gold is form'd, where diamonds shine:
Earth's finest atoms never yet
To mould a fairer fabric met,
Than shrin'd the spirit bright of young Plantagenet.

XII.

Alas, sweet rose! thou dost but blow,
The wonder of a ruthless season!
Gay bloom thy petals, while below
Preys at thy root the canker treason!
And thou shalt fall! But shall the Muse
In sullen silence see thee perish,
And shall her rigid eye refuse
The bright, benign, embalming dews
Which fall the hero's name to cherish?

XIII.

" Brave Clifford!" cried the gallant youth,
With glowing cheek and kindling eye,
" Long since thy deeds have seal'd thy truth,
Bright pledges of thy fealty!
Then swear not!—Should mistrust pervade,
Wavering and base, thy prince's heart,
Go, leave him—meet to be betray'd!
And conquer on some nobler part!

XIV.

"Yet, Baron, in thy manly breast
Some shrinkings cold may well abide,
To see our princely House's pride
On such a feeble column rest!
And, trust me, I forgive the sigh
With which e'en now I mark'd thee trace,
Heedful, intent, with pensive eye,
The untried stripling's beardless face;
Yet ere this young and smiling day
Shall change his crimson robe for grey,
And faint and falter on his way,
Or I will win thy generous trust
Or shroud my feebleness in dust!"

XV.

Now to the Cumbrian Baron's ear
I wot that modest boast was dear.
"Oh, by St. George!" he cried, "to-day
This boy shall shew our veterans play!
Spirit of Monmouth! even now
I hear thee speak! I see thee glow!

Beneath our banners walks there one
On whom the breath of fear has blown,
Who, marching coldly to the fray,
Thinks sadly on the close of day,
Now let him cheerly lift his head,
Tis Monmouth's spirit leads, which never droop'd or fled!"

XVI.

Some Gallic drops there lurk'd, I ween,
In the proud veins of England's Queen;
No marvel then fifth Harry's fame
On Margaret's ear unkindly grates,—
How can she love that dreadful name
Which every Frenchman hates?

XVII.

" What, Clifford! wouldst thou teach thy tongue,
Thy rude and rugged tongue, to praise?
Trust me, it ill abides the wrong,
And awkwardly its task obeys,
It hates to mould the courtier's phrase!

Oh, I have heard it in the field
In thunder bid a foeman yield;
And I have heard its thrilling shout
Recal the base, dispersing rout;
And I have heard it rend the sky
With the bless'd peal of victory;
But never, Clifford, wilt thou teach
That organ, tun'd to war, the flatterer's silver speech!

XVIII.

"Now hear *me*, Edward! In *thy* heart,
Thy arm and sword, put *I* my trust!
Margaret invokes not, on thy part,
A grandsire from the dust!
Go, win me back thy father's throne;
And, even as the wrong, be the success thine own!

XIX.

"Know, Prince, I send thee not to war
As son by low-born mother sent:—
Serene and fix'd, I watch thy star
Now rising in the firmament,

And wait unshrinking the event!
To its high course if Fate unkind
Has but a short career assign'd,
Yet, falling, it may leave a brilliant track behind!

XX.

"Oh, heaven! what evil days of gloom
Have left their furrows in my breast!
Yet distant, distant be the doom
Which stays my troubles in the tomb
And yields ignoble rest!
Where is the pang, the woe, the care,
This dauntless spirit shall not dare?
What path too rugged, wild and strange,
For Margaret's fearless foot to range?
Ordain but heaven that, at the last,
Guerdon of wrongs and sorrows past,
She feeds, she feasts her eager eye
Upon her foeman's misery!"

XXI.

Bright was the beam of Edward's eye,
And rich the bloom on Edward's cheek,
Yet from his gallant breast a sigh,
A human sigh, did break;
He sigh'd to think so dire a guest
Might harbour in a woman's breast!

XXII.

" Mother, from yonder concave sky,
Far rais'd above our earthly ken,
An awful, just, eternal eye
Looks on the deeds of men!
Whether in open, manly wise,
With glowing blood, in combat bold
I seize the hard-contested prize,
Or loosen honour's noble ties
With hand deliberate and cold,
Shall that unerring eye behold!

XXIII.

" Oh, rather fail this ardent breath,
And palsied sink this hand in death,
Ere with keen taunt, and lingering blow,
I hover o'er a fallen foe!
No! when the battle rages dire,
And the rouz'd soul is all on fire,
Think'st thou a noble heart can stay
Hate's rancorous impulse to obey?

XXIV.

" Then, Madam," said the Cumbrian lord,
" Bid *him* obey thy just behest
Who still delights with lance or sword,
Or sharper edge of bitter word,
To goad thy foeman's breast!
The lance unblunted still remains
Which open'd Rutland's infant veins;
Proud York, the voice which on thine ear
Pour'd sounds thy soul abhorr'd to hear,

Still frames, to vex thy rebel race,
Like words of insult and disgrace!"

XXV.

" Enough, good Clifford. Yonder throng
Of lawless rebels know thee well;
Nor holds yon hostile camp a tongue
Which, mix'd with curses, cannot tell
That Clifford's name is dire and fell
As ban-dog's howl, or witch's spell.
Warriors, begone!—the advancing day
To glory summons ye away!
Begone! a breathless nation waits—
And Victory the lingerer hates!
Begone, begone!—his steps are slow
Who hears a woman bid him go!
Away! Towards yonder royal height,
My eaglet, imp thy wing for flight!
Be rapid and be bold!—and God defend thy right!"

XXVI.

"Yet, mother, yet—how long soe'er
The coming conflict may appear,
Oh, let no ill-endur'd suspense,
No keen impatience tempt thee hence!
Success sometimes a traitor proves;
But, Lady, while thou shelterest here
Amid these dark and hallow'd groves,
Nor wrong, nor insult shalt thou fear!
If, which the powers of heaven forefend!
Our blushing Rose her stalk must bend,
Yet, *thou* art safe—some loyal hand,
Spar'd mid the ruin of our band,
Unknown, shall lead thee hence to Scotia's friendly land."

XXVII.

"Get thee to horse!—if longer here
Thou waste in idle talk the day,
By heaven! ourself will seize the spear,
And rush before thee to the fray!"

But while she spake the taunting word,
Audacious, ardent, and elate
Young Edward on the saddle sate,
And ne'er did lovelier, braver lord
Ride forth to challenge Fate!

XXVIII.

As Clifford vaulted on his steed,
New sounds along the woodland rang,
For of the veteran's ponderous weed
Echo repeats the bruyant clang;
The gallant steed obey'd the check,
Used to his master's strong command,
As bending o'er his arching neck
Courteous he kiss'd his iron hand.

XXIX.

They are gone! The half embracing boughs
Before their rapid course recede,
But soon again the branches close
Concealing man and steed:—
Awhile the Queen a listener stood

And eager caught the lessening sound,
Which faint and fainter smote the ground,
Of war-horse fleet and good;
Then Margaret turn'd, and turning smil'd,
Yet ghastly was the smile, and wild,
As inwardly she breath'd a farewel to her child.

XXX.

She was alone: nor sound, nor sight,
Or near or distant, met her sense;
'Twas like the stillness of the night,
Or fearful pausing of suspense.—
That breathless, noiseless calm oppress'd
The warrior Queen's unquiet breast;
She fear'd, tho' all unus'd to fear,
And, trembling, felt that God was near!
Yet Margaret pray'd not, tho' her child,
Her only child, mid havoc stood,
And hardly staid the effort wild
Of foeman burning for his blood,—
She rais'd not for her gallant son
The mother's tender orison!

XXXI.

The yielding turf as Margaret press'd
She listen'd eager for a sound,
She felt the discord in her breast
Insulted by the peace profound,
And darkly on the scene she frown'd;
Yet still the woodland smil'd serene,
Unconscious of the frowning Queen!

XXXII.

Now from the distant battle field
A mingled sound of tumult came;
The lady starts—for all her frame
With strange delight is thrill'd!—
"The stern defiance then is past!
Our trumpets have provok'd the foe,
And at the loud triumphant blast
Rebellion vails his caitiff brow;—
Lo, they encounter!—horse to horse
In gallant onset wildly dashing!
Methinks I mark their headlong course,—
I hear, I hear the menace hoarse!

I see their falchions fiery flashing!—
I hear the ponderous shock of arms together clashing!

XXXIII.

" Ill didst thou, Nature, to combine
With woman's form a soul like mine!
What heart in either grim array
Throbs to the charge with wilder beat!
What ear so loves the trumpet's bray
That bids contending thousands meet!
Whose thirst like mine, when blood of foes
Warm from the gasping fountain flows!
Whose nerves more firmly brac'd to dare!
Who loves like me to crush! who hates like me to spare!"

XXXIV.

When Winter in his wrath unbinds
With ruthless hand his ruffian winds,
And sends them forth in fierce career
The shuddering leafless groves to tear,
Strange voices seem to fill the sky.—
And now the rude and boisterous North,

Like threatening thousands, clamours forth,—
And now one deep convulsive sigh
Upon the ear sobs sullenly!—
Next comes a ghastly pause—and now
Again with rallying force the gather'd whirlwinds blow.

XXXV.

Thus sometimes to the royal dame,
With sudden burst, the rumour came
As 'twould the welkin fill,—
And then at once upon the gale
The victor-shout, the dying wail,
And all the mingling sounds would fail
As if the bloody work stood still!

XXXVI.

Now, flashing thro' the leafy screen,—
Revealed now—and now unseen—
In lustrous panoply array'd,
A knight came glancing thro' the glade;
Right on he rode:—his urgent speed
Nor check nor barrier might impede,

For swift the opposing branches fell,
Like foes beneath his trenchant steel;—
Swift rode he as the winged blast,
Sharply he spurr'd his willing steed,
And, in his overweening haste,
Even she he sought he would have past,
So headlong was his speed!

XXXVII.

The Queen beheld with angry eye
The hot-brained knight's career,
And now her voice she sent on high
With accent shrill and clear,
" Stay thee, Sir Knight! if cowardly
From yonder field thou dost not fly;
For never sure such speed had other goad than fear!"

XXXVIII.

Nor heard nor felt the impatient spleen,
The youthful knight salutes his Queen,
While still impatient in his speed,
He flung him from his half-curb'd steed;

And Margaret sees, with brightening glance,
The kneeling captain bears young Beaufort's cognizance.

XXXIX.

Breathless he cries, "Hail, Royal Dame!
I bring thee news shall make thee smile!
'Twas therefore Beaufort hither came
And left the work of death awhile,
To fill thy dauntless heart with mirth,
And tell thee that thy subject earth
Insatiate drinks, in thirsty mood,
Libations large of rebel blood!
The day is ours! and day more bright
Ne'er mid the welkin rose to gild auspicious fight!

XL.

"Before the onset, while we stood
In sullen, silent, grim delay,
Fronting the foe in vengeful mood,
Each bosom panting for the fray,
Even then, before a foot was stirr'd,
Before a trumpet-breath was heard,

Swift pass'd before my prophet sight
The glorious issue of the fight;—
For, Lady, as with eager eye
The rebels' level lines I scann'd,
The gale, averse and drowsily,
The hostile streamers fann'd;
Close to its staff the banner clung,
Forlorn each chieftain's plumage hung,
And ne'er, methought, with colder cheer
Did warlike band to foe draw near!—
For us, upon the buoyant gale
Banners and plumes were proudly floating,
While from our gaily glancing mail
Long streams of radiance pour'd, heaven's fav'ring smile
denoting."

XLI.

Now when the knight, o'erblown and panting,
Paus'd because breath and speech were wanting,
And lean'd in silence on his sword,
The Queen, with penetrating word,
Half doubting, half in hope, bespake the youthful lord.

XLII.

"Oh, say, Lord Edmund, art thou sure,
Sure art thou that the day is ours?
Is veering victory *quite* secure,
Quite broken are yon rebel powers?—
And didst thou see the victory won,
And see the hot pursuit begun?
Did Montague forsake the fight?
Did Warwick fly the adverse field?
Oh, conquest proud!—triumphant sight,
To see the stubborn Warwick yield!
Half England's treasure would I give
To him who takes that lord alive!
One groan, one heart-wrung groan, from thee,
Warwick, were more than victory!—
But say, Lord Edmund, soothly say,
Does Fate *confirm* the victory ours,
Or merely, in capricious play,
A moment shine upon our day,
In darkness once again to plunge its endless hours?"

XLIII.

Meanwhile the Knight had loos'd the brace
Which close the stifling bever tied,
And with embroider'd kerchief dried,
By Margaret's royal hand supplied,
The dew which bath'd his glowing face:
Reflexion now reprov'd the wrong
Done rashly by his sanguine tongue,
For now the generous youth was forc'd
To chill the joy his ardour nurs'd.

XLIV.

" When princely Edward bade me speed
To thee with goodly tidings fraught,
As swift I flew as winged thought,
So eagerly I prick'd my steed;
And now, I fear, the race intense
Confus'd and whirl'd my giddy sense,
And taught my foolish tongue to speak
At random, heedless, rash, and weak,
Of things as done which were beginning,
And of that prize as won, which we were only winning!"

XLV.

Scarce eighteen rapid years had sped,
With trackless course, o'er Beaufort's head,
And they who mark'd his beardless chin,
And ruddy lip, could ill have guess'd
The steady hate that lurk'd within
That youthful captain's breast!
There, unappeasable and dire,
Stern Vengeance blew the ruthless fire
And told him of his murder'd sire!
Train'd to the work of danger early,
Young Beaufort, joyous and content,
His latest life-drop would have spent
To nourish and maintain a cause he lov'd so dearly!

XLVI.

Seldom Lord Edmund had beheld,
Save mid the strife of hostile field,
Of bended brow the menace keen;
And sure the wight whose visage grim
Had glanc'd an angry look on him
Were ill advised, I ween;—

What was there then in woman's frown
That brought this mounting spirit down?
For now, what man nor dar'd, nor could,
Queen Margaret's look of scorn effected;
Abash'd, rebuk'd, young Beaufort stood,
Drooping his lofty crest, dishearten'd and dejected!

XLVII.

"Beshrew thee, rash presumptuous boy!
What! must the royal ear be fill'd
With every empty, idle toy,
At pleasure of a heedless child!
Go, teach thy crude unripen'd sense
The act of subject reverence;
And tell the Prince, when next he sends
His Mother and his Queen to greet,
'Twere well he sought, among his friends,
Embassador more meet!"

XLVIII.

Scarce had the haughty Margaret's word,
Like burning arrow, lanc'd his breast,

Than, feeling all his strength restor'd,
Aloft young Beaufort flung his crest,
While o'er the cheek that shame had dy'd
Mantled the deeper glow of pride;
The flash which shot from either eye
The kindling of his soul betray'd,
Yet still his tongue confest the tie
Impos'd by deep-sworn fealty,
Which all indignant phrase, or rough retort forbade.

XLIX.

He paus'd,—while to the earth he cast
His eyes, which burn'd with angry flame:—
" By princely Edward's mandate grac'd,
To seek thy presence, royal Dame,
Unworthy of the charge, I came!—
' Go, Beaufort, seek the Queen, and say
The heavens fight for us to-day!
Go, tell her, that the sunshine hour
Smiles gaily on our blushing flow'r;
Already, say, a thousand foes
Have shed their blood to feed our Rose;—

And tell her, that her son has vaunted
In heart of England's Isle to see it firmly planted!'

L.

"Then, mid the centre of the fight,
Audacious plung'd the royal Knight!
Till then—so please you—we had stood
Together striving with the flood;
As brother by the side of brother,
Our friendly shields still fenc'd each other:—
Reluctant, I obey'd his word,
And stay'd, half-quench'd, my thirsty sword:—
Even as I left the glorious scene,
An humble herald to my Queen,
Mine ear was greeted by the cry,
The thunder-peal of Victory!
Scarce from the host had Beaufort parted,
Than, sweeping down upon the left,
Young Edward, like a falcon, darted,
And Hastings' well-knit line with force resistless cleft!

LI.

"Now pardon, Lady!—ere I fly
To fight again for thee and thine,
Even as my father died, to die,
Perchance, for thy illustrious line,—
One moment's pleading, Lady, hear,
One word for youthful Lancaster!
I know not but his princely eye
Sought vainly mid the armed throng,
One, whose hoar head, and pausing tongue,
And colder spirit, might supply
A missive meet for majesty:—
Alas, alas! the ripen'd ear
Has perish'd from your golden field!
The crops which now your meadows bear
A crude and unsunn'd harvest yield!
Each warrior sage, maturely brave,
Who to the blushing Red Rose clave,
Too early summon'd, yielded place
To us, a wild uncounsel'd race!
Our sires are past away—we combat on their grave!"

LII.

The mild rebuke was all unfelt;
Idly it fell on Margaret's ear,
Because her mind intensely dwelt
Upon a vision proud and dear,
The fame of youthful Lancaster!
Not with a mother's tender joy
She thought upon her gallant boy,—
'Twas joy, concenter'd, and austere,
Unwater'd by maternal tear,
Unmingled with maternal fear!
Even such her joy as might possess
The breast of mountain lioness,
When first her flashing eyes behold
Her young ones raging wild amid the slaughter'd fold.

LIII.

A smile so fraught with sovereign grace
Illum'd the Royal Lady's face,
That well, I ween, the Knight forgot
The ireful glance those eyes had shot;

The smile just reach'd the galled heart,
And heal'd at once the wounded part.

LIV.

And now Lord Edmund, bending low,
Besought the Queen with courteous pray'r,
That she some guerdon might bestow,
Some relic, gaud, or riband fair:—
" Trust me, my Queen, this heedless boy,
Like relic bless'd, shall guard the toy;
And he will wear it in despite
Of yon Pale Rose's sharpest thorn!
Oh! should her fiercest, proudest knight
Uplift his hand to do it scorn,
Malignant was the star that shone when he was born!"

LV.

Then round his armed wrist she bound
Her kerchief, stiff with beaten gold,
Where, blushing fair on glittering ground,
The crimson rose you might behold;
Quick to his lips and to his breast

The royal hand young Beaufort press'd,
Then swift upspringing rose the Knight,
And with impetuous hand he freed
The noose which held his barded steed,
And, reckless of his cumbrous weed,
Leapt in his lofty seat, impatient for the fight!

END OF CANTO THE FIRST.

NOTES TO CANTO THE FIRST.

Lo! where old Walden's hallow'd wood.—Stanza III. l. 1.

At a little distance from the Tyne lies Nether Walden; it is hallowed to churchmen as having been the retirement of Saint John of Beverley: Pennant says, Saint John of Beverley made the adjacent woods his retreat from the world.

Clifford, with honest, ready zeal.—St. X. l. 5.

The Author has here ventured somewhat to extend the wonted limits of poetical privilege, by the introduction in this place of the warlike personage in question, who was, according to fact, slain two years earlier in a conflict at Ferrybridge, the Lord Falconbridge commanding on the adverse side. The Lord Clifford and his company were unexpectedly surrounded, and, as Hall says, "either for heat or payne putting off his gorget, sodaynly with an arrowe withoute an hedde he was striken into the throte, and incontinent rendered his spirite."

That Clifford's name is dire and fell.—St. XXV. l. 5.

In celebrating the staunch adherence of this faithful partizan to the perilous fortunes of the House of Lancaster, it is with regret we add to the record, that his nature was so notoriously sanguinary

as to obtain for him, alike from friends and foes, the odious appellation of "John the Butcher." The death of his father in the first battle of St. Alban's was his alleged excuse for the excessive indulgence of this inhuman propensity. The murder of the infant Earl of Rutland is thus described by Hall,—speaking of the battle of Wakefield, he says, "While this battaill was in fightynge, a prieste called Sir Robert Asphall, chappelein and schole master to the yong Erle of Rutland, sonne to the Duke of Yorke, scarce of the age of 12 yeres, a faire gentelman and a maydenlike person, perceivyng that flight was more saveguard then tarriyng, both for him and his master, secretly conveyed therle out of the felde by the Lord Clifford's band towarde the towne; but, or he could enter into a house, he was by the sayd Lord Clifford espied, folowed and taken, and by reson of his apparell demaunded what he was—the yonge gentelman dismaied had not a word to speake, but kneeled on his knees imploryng mercy and desiryng grace, both with holdyng up his hands and makyng dolorous countenance, for his speache was gone for feare. 'Save hym,' sayd his chappelein, 'for he is a prince's sonne and peradventure may do you good hereafter.' With that the Lord Clifford markyd hym, and sayd, 'By God's blode thy father slew myne, and so will I do thee, and all thy kyn;' and with that word stracke the Erle to the hart with his dagger, and bade the chappelein bere the Erle's mother and brother word what he had done and sayd. In this act the Lord Clifford was accompted a tyraunt and no gentelman; for the propertie of the lyon, which is a furious and an unreasonable beaste, is to be cruell to them that withstande hym, and gentle to such as prostrate and humiliate them selfes before hym." *Hall's Chronicle.*

That kneeling captain bears young Beaufort's cognizance.
St. XXXVIII. l. 6.

Lord Edmund Beaufort was the second son of Edmund Duke of Beaufort, who fell in the first battle of St. Alban's, and who was

succeeded in his dignities, and in his attachment to his master's House, by his eldest son Henry, who was taken and beheaded after the battle of Hexham, when Lord Edmund became in his turn Duke of Somerset, an honour which he likewise bore for a very brief yet troublesome period.

Did Montague forsake the fight?—St. XLII. l. 7.

Lord John Neville, younger brother of the Earl of Warwick, created by Edward IVth, Marquis of Montacute or Montague, was commander in chief of the Yorkists at the battle of Hexham.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE SECOND.

I.

Oh, Sorrow! which of Adam's race
Has not beheld thy wrinkled face?
Of all the hearts which life has warm'd
Since the first man of clay was form'd,—
Of all the mortals who have hasten'd,
Like shadows, o'er this rolling sphere,—
Has one return'd to earth unchasten'd
By thy reproof severe?
Each breast, however fortified
By courage, apathy, or pride,

Has still some secret path for thee,
Man's subtle foe, Adversity!
Along that secret way thou glidest,
And deep within the centre hidest,
And many a surface fair and shining
Conceals a wasted core, where thou art slowly mining!

II.

Who knows thee not? If yesterday,
With lightsome step, escap'd thee, Sorrow,
Thou dost but lurk beside the way
To spring upon thy prey to-morrow,
And seize, secure, the fools who lie
Charm'd by Enjoyment's lullaby!
Does Hope allure—does Pleasure smile?
Then tread the rosy path with trembling,
For Pleasure beckons to beguile,
And Hope's fair promise is dissembling!
Oh, then,—tho' azure be thy sky,
Look for the cloud which comes to-morrow;
Thus only, Man, may'st thou defy
The unchanging word of Destiny,
Which to thy guilty lip decreed the cup of Sorrow!

III.

With leaden pace, hour after hour
Roll'd wearily away;
The dew-drop hung in every flow'r;
And now behind the western bow'r,
Slow sinking, shed the parting day
A bright yet melancholy ray,
A farewel glance,—then clos'd its eye,
And mingled with eternity!

IV.

Thro' many a heavy hour the Queen
Sate musing mid the lonely scene;
She sate, with folded arms, reclining,
And anxious watch'd the day declining:
Amid the glen the evening wind
In low but fitful murmurs crept;
And where on high the branches twin'd,
With nimble bound the squirrel leapt;
With rustling wing the speckled thrush
Flutter'd unseen within the bush,
And, as the twilight shades were falling,

Each bird its truant mate was calling;
And Margaret started oft, and thought
Each sound confus'd that met her ear
Proclaim'd the expected herald near,
From Hexham's field of death, with fateful message
fraught!

V.

Rising above the silent wood,
Night's regent pour'd a silver flood,
And bright her glittering spangles fell
On many a sleeping flow'ret's bell:
Margaret look'd upwards, and beheld
How, floating in her azure field,
She shone in dignity supreme,
Unmock'd by any rival beam;
With envy gaz'd the earthly Queen—
"Oh! thus, predominant, alone,
Thus would I fill the boundless scene,
And from my lofty seated throne,
Like thee, my smiles and frowns bestow,
Beheld with silent awe by multitudes below!"

VI.

Breathing Ambition's inward pray'r,
With eyes uplifted, Margaret stood,
And her pale brow and ebon hair
Gleam'd in the silver flood;
Quick mov'd her lips,—but word or sound
Broke not the quietness profound;
Like Sybil form of elder time
Weaving the dark portentous rhyme,
She stood—or them whose glance forbidden
Dares scan the things which Fate hath hidden!

VII.

Rouze! rouze, and listen!——for indeed
A distant bugle summons shrill,
While heavy hoofs of barded steed
The lessening pauses fill!—
" It comes, it comes!—the eventful hour!—
The messengers of Fate are nigh!—
They bring me vengeance, pomp, and pow'r;—
Or loss, defeat, and misery!

VIII.

"Come on! come on!—hark!—well I know
The note of Clifford's bugle-horn!—
Yet boldly he was wont to blow—
Why speaks it now so faint and low,
Like voice of one forlorn?
Beshrew my fears! this toilsome day
May well excuse the languid blast;
Even Clifford's strength must fain give way
To such a long contended fray;—
Yet—how the lingering minutes waste!—
I would he rode with Beaufort's haste!"

IX.

Meanwhile, with heart which smote her side
As tho' a passage it would free,
Along the dewy path she hied
To meet her destiny.
Lo! in the dim and distant glade
Two mailed knights advance,
Upon their helms the moonlight play'd,
And tipp'd each glittering lance!

Dismay'd, perceiv'd the Royal Dame
How heavily the horsemen came;
They came not as if wing'd elate
With message of triumphant Fate,
Yet nor as fugitives they came
Close goaded at the heels by peril and by shame!

X.

Nearer the Queen approach'd; and now,
With faltering tongue, her greeting sent,
When from his courser sinking low
The foremost rider bent.
'Twas Clifford.—To the grassy ground
Helpless he fell, outstretched and prone,
While from his bosom's depth profound,
Like vaulted echo, heav'd an anguish-breathing groan.

XI.

Young Lancaster, for it was he
By Cumbrian Clifford's side who rode,
Alighted slow, while mournfully
His filial greeting he bestow'd;

" Oh, help me, Mother! loose the brace
Which closely binds the aventayle,
That o'er poor Clifford's dewy face
May blow the cool night gale!"
The brace was clogg'd with sable gore,
Which bound the heavy burgonet,
And all the weed the Baron wore
With gory stains was wet:

XII.

But now they raise the drooping head
And throw the cumbrous casque aside,
When, with a look of wrath and dread,
Clifford his eye-lids open'd wide,
And " Hence! unthinking boy!" he cried,
" Hence! leave me to my fate, for what can harm the dead!"

XIII.

" What *thou*, who in thy bosom bearest
Those gashes which at mine were aim'd!
'Tis then but for my life thou carest,

A life dishonour'd, stain'd, and sham'd!
No, hope it not! I'll stay by thee
While one red drop is in thy veins,
While one dim spark of life remains
To warm thy loyal heart, or glimmer in thine eye!"

XIV.

Now all too well Queen Margaret guess'd
That ruin track'd their tardy flight,
And turning to the dying Knight,
"Clifford, I know thy generous breast
Asks not from us the useless rite,
Small joy 'twould yield thy parting ghost,
If, weakly lingering here, even what remains were lost!"

XV.

Quick from the ground Prince Edward rose,
With scorn and horror in his eyes,—
"And has he shed his blood for those
Who can desert him as he dies!
Oh, heaven forbid his closing ear
Those ill-requiting words should hear!

Like poison'd drops the ungrateful sound
Would fall upon his chilling heart,
And wake in every yawning wound
Stings that would reach his soul!—insufferable smart!"

XVI.

With painful toil, the dying Knight
Half-rais'd from earth his heavy frame,
While thro' the clouds that dimm'd his sight
There shone a quick and transient light,
Like flash of meteor flame;
That rapid and expiring ray
Spoke what his tongue refus'd to say,—
It was the spirit's farewel greeting
Ere from its mangled spoils it flew,
Then turn'd from earth, and heav'nward fleeting,
Hasten'd to join a noble few,
Bright souls of faithful friends, and vassals firm and true!

XVII.

Down Clifford sank; and, as he fell,
His armour rang against the ground!

It was the brave Lord's funeral knell,
A dull and hollow sound!
Prince Edward clos'd the frozen mouth,
And clos'd the glaz'd and ghastly eyes;
The Queen, with anger and surprize,
Meanwhile, impatient, watch'd the youth
Perform the hasty obsequies:
Quick with his blood-stain'd brand he hew'd
The boughs which hung above his head,
And o'er the lifeless warrior strew'd,—
Then, looking on the corse, he said,
"Rude, rude, oh Clifford! is thy bed,
Tho' gratitude and zeal thy humble grave-clothes spread!"

XVIII.

The Queen, resentment and dismay
O'er each indignant feature gleaming,
Cried, "Prince, farewel!—I must away!
For *thee*, an if it please thee, stay
Like beadsman, till the morning dreaming
Over yon senseless clay!
I seek those living friends, who still

Can hear, and can perform my will!
Of feeble sire the feeble child,
Thou, idly loitering, mayst remain,
And like that sire so meek and mild,
Thou too, perchance, mayst not disdain
To wander o'er thy land, led in a rebel's chain."

XIX.

" Hush thee, my Mother! set we on!
Thy harsh rebuke inflames my grief!
Oh! chide not thus thy harass'd son,
And envy not the scatter'd leaf
Which thinly strews yon fallen Chief!
It was but little sure to give
To him who died that I might live!
Clifford beheld an archer aim—
Already had the arrow flown,
Towards my unguarded breast it came,
He flung himself between, and caught it in his own!

XX.

"Quick let us on—yon planet's ray
Shall light us on our sorrowing way;
And grant, oh heaven! my failing strength
May serve me thro' the forest's length!
Zerbino, fare thee well! To-day
Thy sides have born me gallantly;
But, gall'd and wounded in the fray,
Thou canst not aid me on my way,
And I perforce abandon thee!"

XXI.

Nigh his brave master's lifeless corse
Outstretched lay Clifford's barded horse,
As if the faithful beast had stay'd
His master's latest need to aid,
Then, tir'd, had laid him down to die,
Still waiting on his destiny!

XXII.

Grasping his spear in silent pride,
The Prince before his mother strode,—
She little thought how down his side
A crimson torrent flow'd!
But Edward knew his mother's heart,
And sternly bore the secret smart,
The anguish of his wounded breast
Beneath the bruising cuirass press'd;
He dar'd not hope woe's sweet redress,
The balm of sorrowing tenderness:
The bursting dew upon his face
Bore witness to his silent pain,
Yet on he stalk'd in manly pace,
And deign'd not to complain,
While at each step, like darts of flame,
A thousand thrilling stings ran shivering thro' his frame.

XXIII.

Yet not alone did Edward smart;
For deep in Margaret's swelling heart

Of wounded pride the venom'd fangs
Inflicted direr, deadlier pangs,
Pangs more corrosive and severe,
More fierce, more poignant and intense,
Than ever hostile sword or spear
Wak'd in the breast of innocence;
And now, too mighty to be born,
Forth burst they in the words of enmity and scorn!

XXIV.

"If frozen silence might avail
To hide this day's o'erwhelming tale,
I would not ask thee for a story
Of foul defeat, and tarnish'd glory,
I would not ask thy tongue to trace
The record of thine own disgrace!
And yet, methinks, with sounding word,
'Twas that same tongue whose empty vaunt
Swore that thine own resistless sword
In heart of England's isle our ruddy flow'r should plant!

XXV.

"Say! what are we, like outlaws vile
Wandering abandon'd and alone?
Art *thou* the heir of Britain's isle?
Am *I* the partner of a throne?
Weak scion of a Monarch race,
Born to a lot thou canst not hold!
What! patient in thy deep disgrace,
Scar'd by Rebellion's aspect bold,
Would'st thou resign the dangerous place?
Or I do rave, or I do dream,
Or twice ten thousand crested brows
Glitter'd in yester-morning's beam;
They hurl'd defiance on my foes
And fearless rush'd into the strife,
Their bosoms heaving quick with loyalty and life!

XXVI.

"Was it not so! and if it were,
Where are those twice ten thousand now?
And was it treachery or fear
That scatter'd them before the foe

Like the light sand when whirlwinds blow?
'Twas treason! Vile, dissembling race!
'Twas Edward's guile! 'twas Warwick's gold
That turn'd their boiling spirits cold,
And tempted them to their disgrace!
But let yon proud usurper tremble,—
For insecure he sits whose vassals can dissemble!"

XXVII.

Is there a wretch o'erspent with care,
Stung by neglect, or gall'd by scorn,
Or wrestling with the fiend Despair
Who goads him on with pungent thorn
To curse the hour when he was born?
Oh! let him for awhile arrest
The conflict of his stormy breast;
Oh! let him mark how virtue's flame,
How courage firm, how zeal sincere,
Have nerv'd yon stripling's tender frame
Of more than mortal pain the bitter pangs to bear!

XXVIII.

" Traitors! Ye loyal, glorious dead
For us, who fell on Hexham's plain,
In an ungrateful cause ye bled!
Oh! ye have died in vain!
The warm blood trickles down my side,
My heart with grief is torn and rent,
Yet still my spirit was unbent,
And every wound I had defied,
Save that which thro' my soul a mother's tongue has sent!

XXIX.

" Cold orb of night! thy rays are falling
Where England's perish'd pride lies low,
Thy pale looks o'er the scene appalling
A ghastly lustre throw!
There, stretch'd along in hideous sleep,
Our thousands lie, a frozen heap!
Fast knit in loyalty and love,
Hard, hard and valiantly they strove,
Even while they felt Fate's withering frown

On every effort looking down!
Thrice was the hand of death uprear'd,
Thrice 'gainst my breast the bow was bent,
Thrice bold Affection interfer'd
And seiz'd the boon for Edward meant!
Now heaven bestows the just award,
And human gratitude is spar'd!"

XXX.

This burst of generous wrath expended,
The wreck of Edward's failing strength,
Passion with feebleness contended,
But soon the unequal contest ended,
And nature sank at length;
For as they left the sheltering dell
To tempt the wide and dreary plain,
Edward, subdu'd by toil and pain,
No more the conflict might maintain,—
He shudder'd, groan'd, and fell!

XXXI.

In Margaret's fierce and stormy breast
A thousand warring passions strove,
Yet now, unbid, a stranger-guest
Dispers'd and silenc'd all the rest—
Thy voice, Maternal Love!
Ambition, Hatred, Vengeance wild,
Hot Ire, and frozen Pride were flown,
While gazing on her lifeless child,
On heaven she cried, in frenzied tone,
" Oh, save my gallant boy! oh, Edward! oh, my son!"

XXXII.

Yet tho' maternal softness stole,
With force resistless, o'er her soul;
Yet tho' a tear, from anguish wrung,
Upon her burning eye-lid hung,
To aid her fainting boy she sprung!
The helm that crush'd his drooping brows
With hasty hand aside she throws,
And next the hauberk's rigid clasp
Yields to the mother's eager grasp;

Swift from his mangled breast she tore
The linen stiff with blackening gore,
The dew-embued grass she press'd
Against his burning, throbbing breast,
The trampled grass—small aid, I ween!
Yet in that hour of anguish wild
'Twas all a mother and a Queen
Might yield a dying child!

XXXIII.

Now from the lofty arch of heaven
Had every lesser light withdrawn,
For in the distant east was given
The promise of the coming dawn;
A long faint line of saffron light
At first the morn's arrival hinted,
Then, bursting glorious on the sight,
Day's dazzling orb arising bright,
With gold the far off mountains tinted.

XXXIV.

Behold! o'er yonder eastern height
Day comes with roses on his brow!
False promiser! so gay and bright,
What deadly tidings on thy flight
To thousands bringest thou!
Where is thy vest of funeral grey?
Thy robe of mist, thy rain-drops? Where
The frequent, chill, and sullen tear?—
Oh, walk not in the pride of May
O'er the dire wreck of yesterday,
Extinguish'd hope, and strength, and life—
The refuse cold of human strife!
Bring shuddering winds, whose sobbing breath
And hollow sighs may sweep yon solemn scene of death!

XXXV.

Still with Despair's unnatural force,
The Queen supports the seeming corse,
In vain each eager care she tries,
No answering sign of life replies:—
" 'Tis frozen silence all!" she cries,—

"Oh, *now*, inexorable Fate,
I feel, I feel thy conquering hate!
I yield!—a crownless Queen, a mother desolate!

XXXVI.

"Yet thus it shall not be!" she cries,
"My child, my Edward shall not die!"
And the compassionating skies
Forgave the mother's blasphemy.
A frantic glance around she threw
O'er the inhospitable plain,—
A dreary region met her view,
She look'd for help in vain!
Her gaze no low-roof'd hovel bless'd,
No track stretch'd o'er the waste by traveller's foot
impress'd.

XXXVII.

See, from the covert of the wood,
A grim, gaunt ruffian form advance!
Close by the unconscious Queen he stood,
Like prowling beast in wait for blood,

Watching his prey with hungry glance!
Rude harness, such as outlaws wear,
And desperate men who roam the waste,
(Children of havoc and despair,)
His sinewy limbs encas'd:
On his hard brows, by toil embrown'd,
A cap of rusty iron frown'd;
The shaggy mass of raven hair,
Eye, rolling wild with reddening glare,
The lurking watch, the weapon fell,
Hard held, and often rais'd, the ruthless purpose tell.

XXXVIII.

While Margaret felt beneath her grasp
Returning life's tumultuous gasp,
Saw the breast heave, the eye-lids ope,
And hail'd the blissful dawn of Hope,
And hung in extasy to trace
The faint bloom tinge the livid face;
Ah, then, how little did she think
How close she stood on ruin's brink!
Nor warning voice, nor step foretold,

Till Danger grasp'd her in his hold!—
Turning, she met, in mute surprize,
The red and lurid glare shot from a ruffian's eyes!

XXXIX.

What spark, what gleam of hope was near
That hapless Lady's lot to cheer!
She stood amid the wilderness
Forlorn in lonely wretchedness!
Gaunt strength and cruelty were nigh,
And Avarice mark'd, with burning eye,
The many colour'd gems that shone
Conspicuous on her costly zone!
She, at whose nod the nation bow'd,
Whose voice, like thunder, shook the crowd,—
Oh, dire reverse!—must she endure
To meet her fate from hand obscure!
Oh, must a robber's glaive be dyed
With the imperial stream which feeds that bosom's pride!

XL.

Still firm the Royal Lady stood,
And calmly eyed the man of blood,
Strong in that panoply whose charm
Defies the meditated harm;
The strength that in the heart resides
The ruffian's sinewy force derides!
The savage paus'd.—Dismay'd, he felt
Each nerve relax, each purpose melt;
Yet 'twas nor pity, nor remorse
That check'd him in his murd'rous course;—
He dar'd not strike!—Queen Margaret's gaze
In air the uplifted weapon stays!
Instinct within his vassal soul
Felt and obey'd the strange controul;
Trembling he stood, yet knew not why,
Oppress'd beneath the Sovereign's eye!
Oh, strife sublime!—of issue glorious!
'Tis mind, majestic mind, o'er brutal strength victorious!

XLI.

The Queen, with conscious triumph, saw
That deep dismay, that shuddering awe.
Oh! when a band of crested lords
Engirt her with protecting swords,
And when on her despotic breath
Hung fame and life, or shame and death,
'Twas Fortune's gift! The weak and vain,
The pamper'd minions of whose train,
As often as the great and bold
The pow'r-dispensing sceptre hold:
But now, an exile from the throne,
Wandering abandon'd and alone,
She *felt* the triumph was her own!
She stood as if the abject band
Still waited on her dread command,
And, waving her imperial hand,
With lofty look the robber eyed,
And in a tone of temper'd pride,
"Thou com'st in happy time! save thou thy Prince!"
she cried.

XLII.

Him, the abhorr'd, detested, loath'd,
Whom Crime in all her terrors cloth'd,—
Was it on *him*, that, unappall'd,
For aid a helpless woman call'd!
To him! a murderer gaunt and grim!
Those trusting, social words to him!
" Aid thou thy Prince!"—how strange, how new,
How sweet, how powerful the appeal!
Along each startled nerve it flew
And trembled in his heart of steel!
" Give me the Prince!—thro' flood and fire,
Tho' men and devils should conspire,
This sinewy arm and trusty blade,
Against opposing worlds, thee and thy boy shall aid!"

XLIII.

Swift as the generous promise past,
Upon the scatter'd arms he sprung,—
The glittering fragments, heap'd in haste,
On the young warrior's spear he hung,
And o'er his giant shoulders flung.

The Prince, tho' life began to speak
In his quick pulse and changing cheek,
Yet saw not, heard not;—when his waist
A rugged, nervous arm embrac'd,
He dream'd his corselet's iron clasp
Confin'd him with uneasy grasp,
And as the vigorous robber strode,
Scarce bending with his various load,
He marvell'd that his drowsy steed
Press'd forward with no hotter speed!

XLIV.

The Queen,—*her* courage did not swerve
Tho' anguish throbb'd in every nerve!
Fatigue, disaster and affright
Had prov'd her thro' that live-long night,—
Her frame was woman's,—but her soul
Contemn'd the body's weak controul!
The fever's fire was in her blood,
The cold drop on her temples stood,
Her long, dishevell'd, raven hair
Stream'd wild along the morning air,

Her pale and haggard cheek, her eye
Full of strange light,—her garb forlorn
Amid the tangled forest torn,—
All told superior misery!

XLV.

Along the moorland, drear and wild,
Silent their weary path they hold;
In vain the summer sunshine smil'd
Upon the grim and sullen wold,
O'er whose brown waste no harvests bloom,
Save where the golden-crested broom
Or purple heath-flower break the gloom.
Silent they crossed the lonely fell,
Silent the matted ling they press'd,
No cheering object rose to tell—
Here, wanderers, ye may rest!

XLVI.

All that a woman might abide
Had that unshrinking Lady tried;—
She falter'd now—her dizzy sense

Half yielding to the toil intense,
Gasping, she spake, "Oh, tell me, friend,
Of this our weary path when shall we reach the end?"

XLVII.

The robber, turning to reply,
Beheld the Queen with heedful eye;
By the long rugged journey worn,
Her sandals slight were rent and torn;
Still as she trod, the prickly gorse
Check'd with its stings her painful course;
Those royal feet, once fenc'd with care,
Are now unshielded, bleeding, bare,
While at each step the poignant smart
Rush'd shivering to her stubborn heart!
The soften'd savage, in a tone
Till then to his rough tongue unknown,
The much-enduring Queen address'd,
"Bear yet a little while and, Lady, thou shalt rest.

XLVIII.

" Fear not,—a few hard moments more,
One struggle, and thy toils are o'er!
Where yon blue cloud of smoke ascends,
The wide and barren moorland ends,
That smoke behind its wavering veil
Hides the fair opening of the dale.
Beshrew my heart! right glad am I
That shelter and repose are nigh,
For well I wot, thy sinking frame
Would soon thy dauntless spirit shame,
Tho' 'twere as hardy, tough and brave,
As e'er was bred in outlaw's cave!"

XLIX.

As nigh they drew, the fragrant smoke
Threw round their forms its filmy cloak,
Or soar'd, by wanton breeze upborn,
In curling incense to the morn;
The frequent bleat, the tinkling bell,
Of shepherd's cur the chiding yell;
The beaten path of mild descent

Which from the savage moorland bent,
The gale which came with odours fraught
Late stolen from some bloomy thorn,—
All these a mingled message brought
Of comfort to the heart forlorn!
Bless'd message! e'en the drooping Queen
Half smil'd as she look'd round to hail the softening scene!

L.

Screen'd from the passing traveller's gaze
And shelter'd from the noontide blaze,
Like hermit's cell, or Sybil's grot,
Nestled in shade the peasant's cot;
Before its door an aged dame
Carol'd a song of rustic frame,
And while beside her cow she bent,
And fill'd, intent, the cleanly pail,
The morning music of content
Was echoed thro' the tiny vale,—
A clownish ditty—nor the tongue
Less rude and tuneless than the song;
And yet that uncouth strain was fraught

With music ne'er by minstrel taught:
What skill, what cunning may impart,
What genius bright, or toilsome art,
ie pure, brisk, genuine glee, fresh from a lightsome
heart!

LI.

Between her task and song, the dame
Wist not that stranger-footsteps came;
Now she would pause, with fond caress,
Her mute companion to address,
And now resume her simple strain
And bid the valley ring again,
While chanticleer, with rosy crest,
With neck erect and golden breast,
Swelling and strutting by her side,
Ruffled his plumes, in conscious pride,
nd ever and anon in the shrill descant vied.

LII.

With hollow, eager, craving eye
The Queen the teeming pail beheld;

She would have spoke—but, parch'd and dry,
Her powerless tongue the word withheld,
And her wan lips, tho' op'd to ask,
Quivering and mute, refus'd the task;
Yet while the milky streamlet flow'd,
Thro' every burning vein more fierce the fever glow'd!

LIII.

Still onward with his precious load,
The stout, unbending Rudolph strode,
And stood the unlatch'd door beside
Ere his dread form Dame Maudlin spied;
With eye-lids wide and open mouth,
Breathless she eyed her guest uncouth,
Then sudden on the wind she sent,
In echoing cries, her loud lament,
And every saint in heaven implor'd
To save her from the ruffian's sword;
On Rudolph's ear the cry was lost,
Relentless, he the threshold cross'd,
Push'd wide the half-consenting door,

And, glad his toilsome task was o'er,
Laid his half-conscious charge upon the rush-strewn
floor.

LIV.

Meanwhile the dame's bewilder'd eye
Upon the speechless Margaret fell,
Fix'd grew her gaze, and suddenly
Her tongue gave o'er its boist'rous cry
As bound by wizard spell!
The stranger's wild and awful glance
Held her awhile in helpless trance,
The pail abandon'd, half o'erturn'd,
Shedding its milky treasure stood;—
The Queen in vain no longer yearn'd,
But springing towards the wasting flood,
Bath'd deep her parching lip, and cool'd her boiling
blood!

LV.

Ere yet the eager Queen forbore
The sweetest draught she e'er had tasted,

Lo! Rudolph from the cottage door
With glad and urgent tidings hasted!
" The boy revives!—no more he lies
With filmy, half-extinguish'd eyes!
Haste, Lady, haste! with doubtful gaze
He scans my rugged visage o'er,
And wildly towards the open door
His rapid glance impatient strays!
Hark! he cries ' Mother!' Lady, hear!
I'll speed and tell him thou art near!"
He paus'd not, and, with lighten'd breast,
The Queen on his swift footstep press'd,
And pass'd the humble gate, an uninvited guest.

LVI.

The Prince, tho' weak, to speech and sense
By kindly nutriment restor'd,
With many a quick yet broken word,
Gazing around in dark suspense,
The changes of his fate explor'd:—
" How came we here? Where have we been?
What means this strange, unwonted scene?

What evil chance has fallen, that I
Outstretched, unarmed, and bleeding lie?
Save *thee,* my Mother, all is strange!
Nay, while I gaze, methinks e'en thou,
Partaking in the general change,
Bend'st on thy son an alter'd brow!
Whence comes it?"—while he spake, the smart
Of festering wound thrill'd to his heart,
As 'twould the poignant truth in all its force impart!

LVII.

Hexham's red field and all its woes
Swift to his shuddering fancy rose;
He heard the foe's insulting shout,
He saw the battle's deadly rout;
The baffled struggles of the fight,
The foul defeat, the mingled flight,—
All rush'd upon his brain, and swam before his sight!

LVIII.

No longer pours his faltering tongue
Of questions wild a hurrying throng,

Memory had told him of the fall
Of crested fame, of hope, of all!
A tear from each clos'd eye-lid gush'd,
In silence deep his voice was hush'd,
Save when the workings of his soul
Break loose—too restless for controul;
Then, but half-heard, mid smothering sighs—
" Lost, lost!" from his wan lips in broken murmur dies!

LIX.

That roof of thatch had often rung
With rustic carol stoutly sung,
The glee-inspiring rebeck there
Of minstrel, stray'd from wake or fair;
The simple, soft, complaining strain
From rustic reed of love-lorn swain,
The cheerful sound of neighbour's greeting,
The bagpipe's hum at merry-meeting
When dark Yule-tide had clos'd the door
Against the rattling tempest's roar;
The blazing, crackling log, the laughing
Of merry souls the Yule-cup quaffing;

The welcome wild of nymph and swain
When fragant May is come again,—
Such din, unknown to statelier halls,
Had often rock'd its humble walls,
But the heart-wasting sighs of care,
The central groan of deep despair,
Till Greatness trod its floor, had never echoed there!

LX.

Maudlin at length dismiss'd her fear,
And with unshrinking step drew near;
No whisper to her thought reveal'd
What guests her tiny cottage held,
Nought knew she, but that grief and care
And weariness had shelter'd there;
Full little did she dream, I ween,
Of England's heir, and England's Queen!
And yet, in Margaret's form, the eye
Of skill'd observance might espy
Midst that forlorn and woeful change,
A motley mingling, sad and strange,
Of grandeur and of misery!

LXI.

Still round her waist, a costly zone,
The Orient's dazzling produce, shone,
Which scarce the tatter'd robe confined,
Whose loose shreds wav'd with every wind;
Her matted, long, unbraided hair,
Her wounded feet, unshod and bare,
E'en these, some glittering toys display,
Sad remnants of a better day!
Idly they shine! their gleam abhorr'd
But mocks with ghastly smile the fortunes they record!

LXII.

Dame Maudlin, now no more unseen,
With rustic grace salutes the Queen,—
"Good folk! altho' ye crave it not,
I bid ye welcome to my cot!
Belike, had my old man been nigh
He might have blam'd your courtesy,—
Well, well! mayhap your piteous plight
Had put good manners out of sight:
Ah me! what cruel caitiff's sword

Yon stripling's milk-white breast has gor'd?
Alack! how like a drooping flow'r
Too rudely dash'd by summer show'r,
He hangs his pretty head! poor youth!
Oh! 'tis a ruthless deed! a dismal sight in sooth!

LXIII.

"Nay, grieve not, Lady! grieve not so!
For tho' thou dost not sigh nor speak,
A tear is drying on thy cheek,
And, by thy trembling lip, I know,
Untold, thy bosom teems with woe!
Good Lady! be of better cheer!
Old Oswald will anon be here;
With him a shepherd lad, who knows
Each herb that in our meadows grows;
From humblest weeds his skill produces
Kind balms, and anguish-healing juices;
He says the smallest blossom's bell
Bears treasure in its secret cell,
Nor talks he idly,—for in sooth
His deed has often vouch'd his truth!
Then grieve not, Lady, thus! Gerald shall cure the youth."

LXIV.

Just then, the writhing Prince confest
What anguish stung his wounded breast;
His feverish starts and twisted brows
Betray his sharp and arrowy throes;
Rudolph, impatient, fiery, bold,
Brook'd not the suffering Prince's pain,
His fierce eyes on the dame he roll'd,—
"Do thou this drooping boy sustain,
Rudolph shall fly himself and seek the skilful swain."

LXV.

Quick rising, he in haste resign'd
His charge to Maudlin's gentler care,
Whose bosom, honest, warm, and kind,
Supported England's royal heir!
The mild caress, the cautious hand
That chaf'd his temples damp and faint,
Consoling whispers, soft and bland,
That hush'd, yet pitied his complaint,—
All spoke the tender care, I ween,
Of one who had a mother been.

LXVI.

With rocking, lulling, soothing motion,
Like the calm swell of unvex'd ocean,
Or bearded corn that waves beneath
The warm west wind's caressing breath,
And song monotonous, whose strain
Ne'er hush'd a cradled babe in vain,
Did Maudlin still the sufferer's pain;
Lo! Edward yields!—the gentle spell,
Resistless, on his senses fell,
Unconsciously each closing eye
The kind compulsion own'd of Maudlin's lullaby.

LXVII.

And not alone o'er Edward's eyes
The silent friend of sorrow crept,
Margaret forgot her miseries
And on the scatter'd rushes slept!
Subdued, she dropt her royal head
Upon her hard uncurtain'd bed!
Unseemly couch!—the cottage floor
Trod by the foot of rustic boor!

Ambition! *here* thy votaries lead,
Thy dazzled, flatter'd, pamper'd train,
The slaves who in thy pageants tread,
The proud, the sanguine, and the vain!
Oh, bid them bend the aspiring eye
Low as the cottage floor, where lie
Yon victims of thy flattery!

LXVIII.

Well pleas'd, the hospitable crone
Still murmur'd on her drowsy song,
Till, hark! she listens! 'tis the tone
Of the old shepherd's grumbling tongue,
A churl in speech, his rugged growl
Belied a not ungentle soul;
No smiling promiser was he,
In rough, ill-natur'd phrase he dealt,
While, all unseen, soft sympathy
Within his bosom dwelt!
Asham'd, he harbour'd, unconfest,
In rude disguise, the lurking guest;

Few words, I ween, to friends or foes
Did honest Oswald give, and right uncivil those.

LXIX.

But now, with real discord fraught,
The muttering carl his cottage sought;
Tho' blunt himself, he brook'd but ill
The tongue of Rudolph, blunter still,
Who chid him, as with forc'd consent
Homeward with lagging pace he went;
Nor did his moody muttering cease
Till, as he reach'd his cottage door,
Dame Maudlin pointed to the floor
And beckon'd to be still, and softly whisper'd "Peace!"

LXX.

Swift at the sight the gloomy frown
From his relaxing brow was chas'd,
Appeas'd and mute, the careful clown
Paus'd at the door, and bending down,
His heavy clattering shoon unbrac'd:
Ah! many a one mid lordlings bred

From that rude swain a hint might borrow,
With gentle footstep how to tread
Beside the restless couch of Sorrow!

LXXI.

And, lo! again the latch is rais'd
By him whose skill Dame Maudlin prais'd!
His hands, his cap, his bosom bore
The precious vegetable store;
The breeze his glossy hair had blown
In masses o'er his cheek of brown,
A cheek so tawny you might deem
Had sprung from India's sultry land,
Or that from Gypsey's roving band
Some chance had snatch'd him, for, in sooth,
You'd seldom see a browner youth;
Yet o'er that cheek of dusky hue,
His eyes of melancholy blue
A bright yet trembling lustre threw:
Seldom of smiles the sparkling grace
O'erdimpled Gerald's cloudy face,
But if some favourite vision stole,

In bright surprize, upon his soul,
By transient gladness if beguil'd,
Gerald forgot to grieve, and smil'd,
Not heaven's own beam, when morning wakes
Amid the misty skies, with lovelier radiance breaks!

LXXII.

On tiptoe Gerald lightly crept
To where the Royal Mother slept,
And of green rushes, featly laid,
And heap'd with care. a pillow made;
With noiseless, unobtrusive tread
He glided round the lowly bed,
And smooth'd its ruggedness,—and wept
To think how hard the Lady slept,
To think that, haply, ne'er before
That head had press'd a cottage floor.

LXXIII.

Yet gave he not the moments brief
To idle sighs and thriftless grief,
His was a better task,—he knew

To pity, and to succour too:
Now with selective care he chose,
Amid his blooming fragrant heap,
Herbs, meet the burning wound to steep,
And soothe and lull its angry throes;
And from the cowslip's bell he drew
A gentle, sleep-compelling dew,
For every flower and leaf he bruis'd
[illegible]d and [illegible]ent juice beneath his hand effus'd.

LXXIV.

While thus his kindly task he plied,
He sate the cottage door beside,
Where from his toil no jarring sound
Might reach the slumb'rers;—he had found,
Child as he was, that Sorrow's breast
By Sleep's kind hand is seldom press'd,
But if, perchance, it come—how welcome is the guest!

LXXV.

Of life poor Gerald little knew;
That little, grief had clouded o'er,

When from the troublous world he drew
His transient yet affrighted view,
And sought to know no more!
Fain like the heath-flower would he die,
The heath-flower on its lonely stalk,
Which decks the reckless peasant's walk,
Then withers in obscurity!

LXXVI.

Still Gerald, as the weed he bruis'd,
Upon the stranger's fortune mus'd,
Or pondering yet on visions flown
Mingled their sorrows with his own,
When from old Oswald's calm abode,
With summons loud, grim Rudolph strode,
" Bestir thee, urchin! we would try
The wonders of thy ministry;
But, if thou fail, the idle boast
Full dear that stripling form shall cost!
Know, if thou hast not happy speed,
Rudolph shall bid thee share the meed
Of yonder crush'd and bruised weed!"

Poor Gerald started, half-afraid,
As from his task he rose, and hastily obey'd.

LXXVII.

That Lady, o'er whose silent face,
Stretch'd as she lay on humble bed,
An awful, stern, imperial grace
E'en mid her slumbers spread,
Now met the trembling youth,—her air
Mix'd greeting kind with frowning care,
The despot's nod and suppliant's pray'r;
For thus her varying brow confest
How pride and fortune strove within her haughty breast.

LXXVIII.

Her hapless, friendless, pow'rless lot
One sanguine moment was forgot;
She clasp'd her hands:—" Oh! canst thou stay
That spirit ere it flits away!
Heal *him!* and to thy utmost hope,
Thy wildest wish, give range and scope!

Turn o'er thy thoughts, and if thy breast
Yearn for some blessing unpossest,—
Fear not!—restore my suffering child,
And never sigh again o'er visions unfulfill'd!"

LXXIX.

To brutal threat, or empty strain
Of promise, liberal yet vain,
Alike in silence Gerald listen'd;
But when his timid eyes he rais'd
And on the drooping Edward gaz'd,
A tear upon his eye-lash glisten'd;
"Yes, I *will* heal him!—for I feel,
By angels sent, the power to heal!
Unbrib'd, unforc'd it comes!—'tis given,
A free, a gracious boon from heaven!"

LXXX.

With trembling care the swain unbound
(Unfelt his hand) the angry wound,
Then light the soothing unguent press'd
Upon the torn and throbbing breast;

(The fingers of that hand so brown
Were soft as fleecy eider-down,
And small, as if some fairy sprite
Had lent them to the boy in spite;)
That task completed, Gerald brought,
From cowslips press'd, the drowsy draught,
And, whispering low, the Prince besought
To taste the kind oblivious bowl,
And bathe in dewy sleep his vex'd and restless soul.

LXXXI.

The passive Prince the sleep-juice drank,
Then, feebly, rais'd his eyes to thank
The being, whose benignant art
Had calm'd his grief and lull'd his smart,
Whose gentle hand had charm'd to rest
The stings which fester'd in his breast,
Whose voice had warbled on his ear
Such music as 'twas heaven to hear!
He rais'd his eyes 'twixt hope and fear,—
Hope,—that some vision bright and fair

Stood nigh and look'd upon his care;
And fear,—lest to his languid thought
Fancy some formless dream had brought;—
He lifts, he rolls his anxious eyes
With wild research and mute surprize,
Then from the sun-burnt shepherd lad
Turns them in haste away, bewilder'd, vex'd and sad!

LXXXII.

Yet Gerald miss'd the cloudy look,
While from a dark and distant nook
An old half-stringed harp he took,
Whose plight, neglected and forlorn,
Full well its former story told,
Whilom thro' many a village borne
By vagrant minstrel, blind and old,
Now rested from his toil beneath the church-yard mould.

LXXXIII.

Whence Gerald had the skill to bring
Such music from the time-worn string,
Why from its wreck'd and crazy frame

Such wild yet potent warbling came,
I know not!—sad, yet sweet it fell,
Till every breast began to swell,
And e'en o'er Rudolph's rugged soul
All unawares the influence stole;—
Forth from the cot he rush'd awhile,
Mistrustful of the urchin's guile,
Deeming that elfin hands alone
Had pow'r to wake that thrilling tone.
Margaret, on whom Dame Maudlin's care
Officious press'd her rustic fare,
Started, and gaz'd upon the swain,
Then on his broken harp, and marvell'd at the strain.

LXXXIV.

The sun has faded in the west,
And now the blackbird seeks his nest,
The owlet sails on heavy wing,
The bat flits by with restless swing,
And simple folk are gone to rest;
The spider's dull unvarying tick,
Sad token for the old and sick!

The cricket's chirrup, ceaseless, shrill,
The watch-dog's howl, or, ruder still,
The good-man's snore, whose drone profound
The cottage fills;—the tedious sound
Of gnats and night-flies buzzing round
Ceas'd not;—yet deep, unconscious rest
Each cottage inmate's eye-lids press'd,
Save Edward, who, in transient doze,
At times, his thrilling pangs would lose,
Or the brown shepherd-boy, who chose,
Thro' the dark hours, to watch and wake
For that unhappy stranger's sake.

LXXXV.

Without, beneath a beech-tree's shade,
Rudolph his giant limbs had laid,
On the rude earth's unpillow'd bed,
Reckless, he flung his hardy head,
As thoughtless of to-morrow's tide
As the fierce watch-dog by his side.
And now, good night! for I would fain,
Like them, forget my task awhile,

And when the morn begins to smile,
And when the birds resume their strain,
I'll join the choir betimes and wake the lyre again!

END OF CANTO THE SECOND.

NOTE TO CANTO THE SECOND.

When dark Yule-tide had clos'd the door.—Stanza LXIX. l. 9.

YULE, or Yule-tide, was a word formerly used to signify Christmas; and it is still applied pretty generally to its ancient purpose throughout the north of England. The huge log of wood thrown on the fire to make a merry blaze on Christmas Even is termed the Yule-clog; the pies or cakes baked for this great festival, Yule-dough; the spiced ale, or whatever other beverage forms the rustic libation on this occasion, is called the Yule-cup, &c. Those who would explore the etymology of this word, and inqure further respecting the social customs in use amongst our ancestors at Christmas, will find the subject copiously treated in Brand's Popular Antiquities, edited by Mr. Ellis. Vide page 359, vol. i.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE THIRD.

I.

OH no! tho' every Muse but mine
Shall follow yonder plumed train,
Led by a victor, young and vain,
Yet must a nobler task be thine!
Thou shalt not follow in the crowd
Which tracks the footsteps of the proud!
Fear not, my Muse! Enow there be
To dog the heels of Victory!
There want not tongues to mingle praise
With every shout success can raise!

We'll sit apart from yonder throng,
And sing our own unchorus'd song!
What shall the burthen be? We'll sing,
While yet our lyre retains a string,
The brave yet persecuted form
Which fronts the bursting cloud and struggles with the storm.

II.

Of power uprooted from its base,
And driven by whirlwinds from its place;
Of that stern smile by greatness worn
Thro' each reverse, in Fortune's scorn;
Of those anointed ones, whose eyes
Have look'd on all beneath the skies,
Now high uprais'd on gilded throne,
Now wandering, wretched and alone,—
Still Royal, while the soul defies
Misfortune's worst indignities!
And, when the mighty spirit bends,
And, when at last the struggle ends,
When adverse stars can vex no more,
And Death proclaims the contest o'er,

When sorrow quits them in the grave,
We'll raise our loudest strain to save
All that their fate has left—the memory of the brave!

III.

'Tis day! warm, ruddy, sparkling day!
Lo! night and drowsiness are fled,
The morn has cast her veil away,
And, smiling, doff'd her mantle grey
For robes of orient red!
And now the goodman wields his flail,
And Maudlin seeks her cleanly pail,
Or scatters to the feather'd brood,
Which round her flock, their crumbled food:
Is there a living thing, whose eye
Beholds yon bright orb sullenly?
Lo! even the rude, unreasoning brute
Spontaneous pays his tribute mute!
Man only,—man's averted eye
Dares view that bright orb sullenly!
He scorns to share the general glee,
And spurns the present bliss, pondering on things to be!

IV.

With those whose slumbers earliest fled,
Queen Margaret started from the bed,
Where careful, restless, irksome dreams
Of deep resolves, and wond'rous schemes,
Had troubled sleep's oblivious calm,
And stolen half its blessed balm;
With slight and unobservant eye
She pass'd in haste Dame Maudlin by,
Regardless of her courtesy,
But with relaxing brow she spied
Rudolph, her grim and fearful guide,
And with augmented speed she hasten'd to his side.

V.

The bloodhound darting on his prey
Checks when his master bids him stay,
Crouches and cow'rs at his command,
And licks with gory tongue his hand:
Rudolph, the forest's ruffian child,
As shaggy bloodhound fierce and wild,
Of lion heart and iron frame,

Beneath Queen Margaret's eye was tame,
And by mysterious impulse sway'd,
In unseen fetters held, he listen'd and obey'd!

VI.

Whilst he in mute observance stood,
The Queen her royal will reveal'd:—
" Cross thou, with speed, yon hallow'd wood,
And hie to Hexham's bloody field,
And when thou stand'st amid my foes
Let not thine ear its office lose!—
Gain all thou may'st by craft or heed,
Then hither hie thee back with speed;
Learn, if thou can'st, what friends are left,
That we may hope in them, and mourn for those bereft.

VII.

" Now mark me, Rudolph!" and her eye
Kindled with conscious majesty,—
" I fear thee not! To thee I trust
Hope, empire, life, and dignity!
Thy truth may save,—thy perfidy

Will lay them in the dust!
Save or betray—the choice is thine!
The ruin of a Royal Line
Is in thine hand! A traitor's blow
Has often laid the mighty low,
And many a monarch has been sold
To quench a vassal's thirst for gold!
Now, Rudolph, hasten! If thy breast
May wrestle with the potent test,
Then heaven vouchsafe thee happy speed,
And may no adverse chance thy wish'd return impede!"

VIII.

Rudolph's bent brows and reddening eye,
And blanching cheek, at first reply,
Sternly he view'd the Queen awhile,
Then mutter'd deep, with mingled smile,
In moody accent low and hoarse,
"I hate the coward ways of guile!
My weapon and my law is force!
Lord of the desert,—proud and free,
What need have I of treachery?

Short space shall prove me false or true!"
Then up the narrow path he flew;
For howsoe'er his will was bent,
The deed swift follow'd the intent,
And, rapid as the sweeping wind,
Resolv'd, he never paus'd to breathe, or look behind.

IX.

Methinks 'twere tedious to relate
What rustic cares the day divide,
How, with a distaff at her side,
Watching the Prince, Dame Maudlin sate,
Or how she bustled to prepare,
With much ado, her cottage fare;
Oswald, with murmuring discontent,
Off to his lonely labours went,
For sleep had stol'n, in soft surprize,
On the brown sheep-boy's heavy eyes.

X.

The youthful Prince, whose rouzing sense
Breaks thro' the vapour chill and dense

Which sorrow, weariness and pain
Have rais'd to cloud his dizzy brain,
Now feels the deep and inward smart
That rankled in his wounded heart
Relenting; for the sunny gleams
Of smiling, healing Hope have visited his dreams!

XI.

And now he talk'd, in accents cheering,
Of rallying friends, and prospects clearing,
Of hosts who waited but to hear
Once more his trumpet's brazen sound,
To swarm with sword, and targe, and spear,
His banner-tree around!
Of many a heart that panted yet
To serve the true Plantagenet!

XII.

Now with a chieftain's pride he dwells,
While high his gallant bosom swells,
Upon the struggle brave and strong,
Tho' fruitless, of his loyal throng:—

" Three times did valiant John de Vere,
E'en mid the conflux of his foes,
Rest panting on his gory spear
And half unhelm his glowing brows,
Renewing then his bold career,
And plunging headlong mid the crowd,
With thundering shout he cried aloud,
' For Oxford! and for Lancaster!'
Yet much I fear that orb so bright
Shines not to gild a future fight!

XIII.

" The brave Lord Roos,—I saw him ride
With gore from spur to baldric dyed,
And his own veins the stream supplied;
When death was busy at his heart
And seem'd to warn him to give o'er,
Feebly he flung another dart
And rais'd his arm for one stroke more,
E'en then his foaming, smarting steed
Rush'd onward with ungovern'd speed,

By many a galling arrow stung,
And mid the battling hosts the lifeless warrior flung!

XIV.

"Clifford!——but no, my feeble tongue
Would do that matchless soldier wrong!
Pride of our chivalry! if ere
Again this tarnish'd crest of mine,
If e'er this foil'd and blunted spear
Shall glitter mid the embattled line,
Then, from thy clouds look down, and see
If Edward's soul remembers thee!

XV.

"Twice sunder'd mid the mingling strife,
Born back by the impetuous tide,
That guardian of his Prince's life
Was hurried struggling from my side!
Thro' Hastings' iron lines we cleft,
But soon again the column clos'd,
And I amid the foe was left
Alone to hatred's storm expos'd,

And then it was, with lance in rest,
Like the rough cataract in its course,
Lord Hastings rush'd upon my breast
And dash'd me wounded from my horse;
Trampled and stunn'd and bruis'd I lay,
And life seem'd ebbing fast away,
When Hastings from his courser sprung
And o'er his baffled victim hung,
And shew'd his glittering glaive, and cried—
'Now beg thy forfeit life, or this atones thy pride!'

XVI.

" 'My life! oh, never! I was born
To hold dishonour'd life in scorn!'
I said, and swift the shining knife
Struck at the panting seat of life!
Yet then, as if by scorpion stung,
Back from his prey the Baron sprung,
His helm was cleft, and from his brow
A purple stream began to flow;
Staggering, dismay'd, he backward shrank
Or ere his thirsty weapon drank

The life-blood of his prostrate foe!
As rapid as electric flame
Shot from a summer cloud th' unlook'd for rescue came!

XVII.

"Scarce knew I,—for my dizzy brain
Rock'd like some steeple's restless vane,—
If friend or foeman grasp'd me round
And snatch'd me from the gory ground,
When, looking up, a stranger Knight
In sable harness met my sight;
'Rash Prince!' he cried, 'one moment more,
And Lancaster's last hope was o'er,
And all our blood, and all our pain,
And all our struggles render'd vain!
Think what a noble game we play,
Nor fling a nation's hopes away!'
Then, lifting high his conquering arm,
Wild as the blast, he swept amid the rebel swarm!

XVIII.

" Yet oft, on that disastrous day,
I saw his black plume waving high,
Or thro' his vizor met the ray
Which lighten'd from his eagle eye,
When friends and foes, a mingling host,
In horrid conflict, strove at last,
Or ere we felt that all was lost
And yielded to the whirling blast,
Wherever thickest beat the storm
I saw his tall majestic form,
And to the last I heard him cry—
' Plantagenet and Victory!' "

XIX.

Day wan d ere Edward's tale was done,
Yet Margaret still was bent to hear,
She mark'd not the declining sun
While still with pleas'd and greedy ear
She hung upon his accents dear;
Again her eye with hope is bright,
" Why! let the coward heart despair!

Tho' baffled in th' unequal fight,
Sudden we'll rise with tenfold might
Again yon rebel chief to dare,
Yon gewgaw king, who, for an hour,
May sport him with his borrow'd pow'r,
Till, headlong from his dizzy seat,
One sweeping blast shall lay the pageant at our feet!"

XX.

Maudlin, in homely cares immers'd,
Now started, trembling and amaz'd,
And on the awful stranger gaz'd
As from her lip the menace burst,
Half-doubting lest its import dread
Might threat her unoffending head;
With faltering speech she had address'd,
And suppliant act, her stormy guest,
But Gerald to his lip the warning finger press'd.

XXI.

The good old dame, tho' sore amaz'd,
In silence join'd her broken thread,

She deem'd her guest by sorrow craz'd,
And pity check'd the transient dread:
Twilight was falling,—Maudlin's eye
Intently watch'd the cottage door,
For ever, as the night drew nigh,
She look'd for Oswald from the moor;
The weary Prince, his story done,
Now turns himself to mild repose,
The Queen bends musing o'er her son,
And o'er the silent group the evening shadows close.

XXII.

How still, how hush'd, how calm the scene,
Close wrapt in evening's dusky veil!
And yet, I wot, that haunt serene,
The cry of terror shall assail
Ere the moon rises on the dale!
Greatness is there;—where she abides,
There sudden danger lurking hides,
And rustic safety shuddering flies,
Scar'd by the meteor beams she scatters from her eyes.

XXIII.

Thrice to the door the good old dame
With gentle pace on tiptoe crept,
(Mindful of those who mus'd or slept,)
To see if yet old Oswald came,
But all was still—when on her ear
An unexpected sound was born
Of clattering hoofs, which echoed near;
Now loud and hoarse a brazen horn
Fill'd all the vale!—In dread surprize
Breathless and wild, and pale, to warn her guests she hies!

XXIV.

It needed not,—that summons dread
Through Margaret's heart already thrill'd;
A captive desperate and wild,
She saw the snares around her spread,
And heard the hunter's hated cry
Proclaim triumphant treachery!
Inly she groan'd, "Betray'd! betray'd!"
Then springing on the Prince's spear,

(Beside his couch recumbent laid,)
Nought by the massive weight dismay'd,
Unaw'd, uncheck'd by woman's fear,
To meet the danger ere it came
Impetuous from the cot forth rush'd the Royal Dame.

XXV.

Sleep's heavy, dull, unbroken sway
Upon the Prince's eye-lids lay,
And Gerald, who, with trembling heart,
Had seen the warlike Queen depart,
Now call'd on heaven for wit and power
To save from harm that faded flower,
That sweet, yet blighted rose, which lay
Helpless and prone in ruin's way!
The hope, the generous hope to save,
Had made the timid stripling brave,
Nor pondering long in vain he sought
The helpful and redeeming thought,—
Of Edward's face the ghastly hue,
Those slumbers, frozen, still and deep,
All, all, a faithful picture drew:

Of tranquil Death's unwaking sleep!
And now, on Edward's humble bed
Was many a mourning symbol spread,
And flowers and herbs were scatter'd there
Like offerings on the village bier;
School'd to assist the pious guile,
Dame Maudlin wept and wail'd the while,
And next, from Gerald's harp the sound,
Solemn and sad, of dirge profound,
Hymning the passing soul, was heard to float around.

XXVI.

Gerald, with anxious, sickening heart,
Unequal pulse and sudden start,
Now sends the mournful strain on high,
Now stops, and listens fearfully!
Soon must the dread suspense be o'er;—
Advancing slow, the ponderous sound
Of armed footsteps smites the ground,
And now they pause beside the door!
The latch uplifts, and lo! the Queen!
For now the bright and silvery sheen
Of the late risen moon illumines all the scene!

XXVII.

With cautious step and backward glance,
Leaning on Edward's glittering lance,
Behold the Royal Dame advance!
But not alone—A stranger Knight
Press'd after; on his lofty brows
The thick and sable plumage flows,
O'er his tall form the hue of night
Spreads darkness;—cognizance, nor crest,
Nor blazon bears he, but his breast
A raven scarf o'ershades,—from brow to heel,
From spur to helm, the knight is clad in sable steel!

XXVIII.

As Margaret view'd the alter'd scene,
And heard old Maudlin's funeral wail,
And Gerald's mourning harp,—the Queen,
Struck to the heart, stood mute and pale!
What might she think? Had Death been there,
And all her fairest hopes destroy'd?
And had he left that casket bare,
Plunder'd, and treasureless, and void!

Silent the sable Knight survey'd
The couch where England's heir was laid,
Then starting from the gaze intent,
Beside the bed his knee he bent,
And gave the struggling sorrow vent:

XXIX.

"Oh, thou cold heap of human clay!
Extinguish'd taper!—Thou being gone
'Tis time to fling the steel away!
The work of blood is done!—
For thee, thou fragile, transient thing,
Thou silent, pale, and senseless corse,
For thee I bear of keen remorse
The never-dying sting!—
Was it for this a brother's blood
Pour'd at my feet the horrid flood
And all my guilty hand and shuddering soul imbued?"

XXX.

Poor Gerald on the Royal Dame
His anxious, timid glances cast,

All trembling, doubting and aghast;
Now fear'd he guile, now shrank from blame,
And sore repenting he beheld
What pangs the mother's bosom swell'd;
But Maudlin could no more abide
That solemn scene of silent woe,
Her kindly tears began to flow,
And, sobbing, to the Queen she cried,
"Oh, grieve not, Lady! grieve not so!
'Twas but a feint to shun the danger
We fear'd from yonder dismal stranger!—
Oh, look upon thy slumbering son!
Hark!—thou may'st hear him breathe!—Lady, he'll
wake anon!"

XXXI.

With dreary, vague, unconscious stare
The Queen beheld the weeping crone,
Her eager words were spent in air,
She pleaded to the senseless stone;
Nor stirr'd, nor spake the Queen, each thought
Seem'd bound some horrid spell beneath,

And to her ear each sound came fraught
With that ill-omen'd hymn of death!
No sight saw she but shrouded dust,
The wreck of Hope and Pride, Ambition's broken trust!

XXXII.

Starting, as wak'd from hideous dream,
Forward she sprang with thrilling scream,
And, with impetuous effort, leapt
On the low couch where Edward slept!
Edward awoke,—for death alone
Against that shriek the ear might close,
Its piercing, harrowing, maniac tone
Now rouz'd him from his deep repose:—
When, mingling pleasure, doubt, and awe,
The vision of his sleep he saw,
He rubb'd his misty eyes, afraid
Fancy had sent some cozening shade;—
'Twas him, indeed!—the bold, the brave,
Firm to support and strong to save
Who rais'd him as he lay beneath the uplifted glaive!

XXXIII.

Ye, who have sped with us along
Listening with willing ear the song;
Ye kind and noble souls, who dare
The minstrel's holy trance to share;
Ye genuine followers of the Muse,
Who watch to foster not accuse,
Pausing, she lifts her eyes to you,—
To you she makes her mute appeal,—
In you she hopes!—Ye are but few,
For who shall judge that cannot feel!
Oh! pardon if her faltering hand
Rest on the lyre unnerv'd and faint
For scenes there are which were prophan'd
Should tongue or pen presume to paint!
Thus fares it now—each to your breast!
There, Sympathy shall tell the rest!

XXXIV.

For, oh! when we approach the part
Where Nature is too strong for Art,
Silence is skill!—There is a sorrow

Whose deep despair no art may borrow;—
There is a joy which never speech,
Nor Muse, nor tranced bard might reach,
It swells the breast, it lights the eye,
It comes from heaven!—'tis extasy!
Guess'd it may be by mortal mind,
But, (subtle as the fleeting wind,)
Angel or madman must he be
Who [illegible] arrest its course and fix it ere he flee!

XXXV.

Now all was bliss! When Edward spoke
Glad wonder hail'd each feeble word,
As if from death's cold prison broke
He sprang indeed to life restor'd!
Snatching her darling from the grave,
The Queen the reins to transport gave,
Yet still between each fond caress
She mock'd at nature's feebleness,
As with indignant shame she felt
Her heart within her bosom melt!
With mute and melancholy joy

The Knight beheld the waking boy;
He might not smile,—stern, silent, sad,
In him 'twere impious to be glad!

XXXVI.

The princely youth, with earnest speech,
(Affection's genuine courtesy,)
His brave deliverer did beseech
To lay his cumbrous harness by:
" Unhelm, Sir Knight! that iron case,
Envious, conceals a noble face,—
A face, where courage, honour, zeal,
And worth unmatch'd, have set their seal!
Unhelm thy brows!—'tis good to trace
The great and gallant soul stamp'd on a manly face!"

XXXVII.

" My Prince! this crestless helmet hides
The abstract of a ruin'd mind!
There Cain's polluting blot abides
And marks me out from humankind!
Alas! my life is in its morn!

My cheek, scarce boasting manhood's down,
By Sorrow's scalding course is worn,
And wither'd by Remorse's frown!
Ambition, Hope, and youthful Pride,
Crush'd by one blow, together died,
And left this breast, their native home,
A dark and melancholy tomb!"

XXXVIII.

The Queen, unus'd to vain command,
Now wav'd with despot air her hand,
With tone that might not be denied
Of mingled courtesy and pride,
She bade him throw his casque aside.
The obedient Knight, with yielding grace,
Slowly remov'd the iron case
And gave to view his manly face;
Nor did its lineaments belie
His form's sublime and martial mould,
For on his brow, erect and bold,
Full nobly trac'd you might behold
How Sorrow strove with Dignity!

'Twas sad to look on thing so blooming
And think its goodly frame Grief's canker was consuming!

XXXIX.

With gracious look the admiring Queen
Survey'd the warlike stranger's mien,
And bade him to his Prince declare
What chance auspicious led his feet
To that remote, obscure retreat,
The changes of their state to share;
Meanwhile, Dame Maudlin, who began
To think upon her own good-man,
Beheld the hour-glass with dismay
And marvell'd at his long delay;
Gerald, to sooth the anxious crone,
To seek the tardy carl had flown,
When, by the dim and winking light
By rushen taper lent, began the stranger Knight.

XL.

" When panic rout, and trembling flight,
And carnage dire, clos'd Hexham's fight,

I turn'd, tho' late, my courser's head,
And from the dismal field I sped;
By crowds pursued, like winged blast,
Thro' Dowill's narrow stream I pass'd;—
Scarce had I dash'd the waters o'er,
And scarce achiev'd the friendly shore,
When, plunging after, I descried,
Foaming and hot in victory's pride,
A crested warrior;—on mine ear
Came words no man ungall'd might hear,
'Oh, spare thy spur, thou craven Knight!
Turn thee, and slack thy coward flight!
Turn thee and yield, ere whelming blow
E'en at my courser's foot shall lay that crestless brow!'

XLI.

"Silent I heard, for ill the tongue
May answer scorn, rebuke, and wrong!—
Silent I heard, but turn'd my steed
And answer made with rapid deed;
With unpremeditated blow
I rush'd on the insulting foe,

The stroke was death!—my vengeful lance,
Tho' couch'd in haste, and aim'd by chance,
Enter'd the narrow gates of light
And clos'd them in the shades of night!
I pierc'd his eye-ball, and he fell
With agony's expiring yell!
Now lies he stretch'd 'mong Dowill's reeds,
A ghastly proof how boasting speeds!

XLII.

" The moon now smil'd upon my flight
And o'er my pathway flung her light,
Yet still, how swift soe'er my course,
Still nearer press'd my eager foes,
Till spent at length, my panting horse
Fell staggering—and no more he rose!
Pondering I stood,—to helpful thought
A moment given, my track I left,
And Dowill's stream returning sought
And once again its waters cleft,
And having stemm'd the rapid flood,
Plung'd mid the shades of Walden's wood;—

Here nature fainted,—o'er mine eyes
A mild, encroaching stupor crept,—
I yielded, reckless of surprize,
And, curtain'd by the foliage, slept,—
And heaven's choristers had long
Awak'd the day with matin song
Ere my restoring slumbers fled,
And, springing from my grassy bed,
Mine orisons were sent on high
To Him, whose omnipresent eye
My helpless slumbers watch'd e'en from His distant sky!

XLIII.

"Reckless, unweeting where I went,
Hopeless and fearless hied I on,
Close o'er my head the branches bent
And screen'd me from the noontide sun;
Nor far I wander'd ere I spied
Some fallen chief's abandon'd pride;
Here lay the gilded helm, and there,
Close by its side, the ponderous spear;
Here glanc'd the gorget, and the shield

Display'd its richly chequer'd field!
Tho' one foul stain of human gore
Had splash'd the burnish'd harness o'er,
I knew—and dropt a soldier's tear—
That Clifford's spoils were scatter'd there!
The gallant beast, who yesterday
Had born his master to the fray,
Dress'd for the battle, stiffening lay!
'Twas but a little while since life,
Revenge, and pride, and strength, had prick'd him to the strife.

XLIV.

" Absorb'd in mournful thought, mine eye
Survey'd the empty blazonry,
Then wander'd where a little mound
Of withering branches strew'd the ground;—
I gaz'd, and started, for I guess'd
Those boughs o'erspread a hero's breast!
'Twas Clifford's tomb!—the keen, the brave
Beneath those simple strewments slept,
And, fearless, o'er the recent grave

The lizard crawl'd, the squirrel leapt!
I felt that not in vain I stood
Alone mid Walden's silent wood!
Why Fate had led me there I knew!
I hail'd my task, I linger'd not,
And, bending o'er the hallow'd spot,
Aside the fragile covering threw,
Small toil it was,—the strong, the bold
Soon lay beneath my gaze, mute, motionless and cold!

XLV.

" I laid him where the branches wove
With pleached arms a dark alcove,
Then turn'd me to my willing toil;
Nor pick-axe needed I nor spade,
My trusty falchion lent its aid,
My helmet scoop'd the loosening soil;
Nor breath'd I till in earth's cold breast
I carv'd the warrior's narrow bed
So deep, that never stranger's tread
His silent relics may molest;
Then, bidding him farewel,—the soil
Upon his frowning face I threw,

Nor paus'd nor slack'd the mournful toil
Till all the chasm clos'd and hid him from my view.

XLVI.

" Nor done my task:—an aged elm
Stretch'd o'er the grave a guardian shade,
And there of Clifford's shield and helm,
His buckler bright, and well worn blade,
(All bruis'd with hacks, with blood defil'd,)
My hands the martial trophy pil'd:

XLVII.

" My rude, unnurtur'd soldier's tongue
In holy chant is little skill'd,
Yet I bethought me of a song,
Meet for the dead,—solemn and wild,—
Which, from among the faded heap
Of early things forgotten long,
Mem'ry amid her stores did keep—
It was my mother's widow-song!—
A song of sorrow for the brave,
Meet to be sung o'er Clifford's grave!

And all night long, with measur'd pace,
My solemn lonely watch I kept,
And, as I pass'd the burial-place,
That dirge I sang, and singing wept!
But not alone to Clifford's shade
Were those weak drops of sorrow paid,
That ancient chant, to childhood dear,
The secret spring had touch'd whence gushes Memory's
tear.

XLVIII.

"Upon my watch the grey morn stole,
And all a soldier might was done,
I pray'd for peace to Clifford's soul
And clos'd each pious orison:
As if that peace, invok'd for him,
Lent half its balmy dews to me,
Sleep soon relax'd each weary limb,
And, stretch'd beneath a birchen tree,
I turn'd from day-light and its woes,
Existence and its cares, and yielded to repose.

XLIX.

" As half-unarm'd and prone I lay,
The day tow'rds fervid noon advanced,
And now a bright and dazzling ray
On my unshelter'd eye-lids glanced,
And, starting, I awoke—when, lo!
Before me stood a form so grim,—
Shuddering, methought I look'd on *him*,
Man's everlasting foe!—
He had stolen on slumber's helpless hour
And watch'd me with malignant low'r!—
With struggle vain to rise I tried,
I lay beneath the ruffian's stride,
He held me in his pow'r!

L.

" I gnash'd my teeth,—I sought to clasp
Those giant limbs with sudden grasp—
No!—moveless as the granite rock,
He stood my fury's baffled shock,
And, laughing loud, in taunting phrase,
Goaded my breast with mock'ry's praise!

Rage, shame, and hatred banish'd fear,
I trembled, but 'twas phrenzy shook,
Reason my tortur'd mind forsook,
And passion's whirlwind triumph'd there!
Stung to the inmost soul, at length
I yielded, for my treacherous strength
No more the struggle would maintain,—
Low as the miscreant's foot, this brow was hurl'd again!

LI.

"My grim antagonist beheld
His victim baffled, spent, and quell'd;—
'What! do I trample on thy pride!
And art thou pacified?' he cried:
'Now, champion, listen to my word,
A single breath decides thy lot,
Uplifts thee, free, to life restor'd,
Or pins thee, writhing, to the spot!
Rais'd thou that doughty arm of thine
For Lancaster's disputed line,
Or, did York's prosp'rous quarrel boast
Its matchless aid,—itself an host?'

Sullen I answer'd,—'He, who now
By fraud lies vanquish'd, not by might,
Has shrouded many a Yorkist brow,
As grim as thine, in endless night!
While life remains, my loyal spear
Shines by the side of Lancaster,
And when I fall, the prize of death,
In vows that he may speed shall waste my latest breath!'

LII.

" The brute releas'd me, and his hand
Uprais'd me from the posture vile,
While each hard feature did expand
To something like a human smile;
'Then thou may'st live! Nay fret not thou
Because I laid thy forehead low,—
My arm is iron, and its blow
Might crush a thousand such as thee,—
Albeit, stripling as thou art,
Thine is a high and gallant heart,
And thou hast struggled manfully!
So take thy life, nor need'st thou scorn,

With brow averse, the boon I give,
Whoe'er thou art,—thy betters born
Smil'd as I bade them rise and live!
'Twas England's Queen and England's heir
First taught this ruthless arm to spare!
I sav'd them!—and shalt thou regret
Thy safety from the arm that sav'd Plantagenet?'

LIII.

"Sullen and motionless I stood
Choaking with rage, and mute from shame,
While thro' my veins the indignant blood
Fretted and boil'd like liquid flame;
But now I started, for his word
Had stricken at length the answ'ring chord,
'And didst thou save them?—Are they free?
Then all thy insults I forgive,
And I will take my life of thee,
And thank thee that thou bidst me live!
For yet methinks I would not die,
Till I shall see yon Red Rose thrive,
And downward strike its root, and bear its head on
high!'

LIV.

" Small parley follow'd,—for my soul
But ill his ruffian pride might brook,
The misplaced language of controul,
The insolent, and victor look;
And time it is the tale were told,
For what remains may well be guess'd,
Save, that or ere I cross'd the wold
A gallant courser's sides I press'd,
A steed, well used to bear the weight,
The ponderous charge of England's fate!
It is Zerbino,—the brave beast
Refresh'd by liberty and rest,
Mine eyes with eager joy espied
Ranging along the forest side;
I wound my horn,—with sudden bound
He started at the warlike sound;
Again I blew,—with eyes of flame
Forward as to the charge he came!
Familiar speech and kind caress
Soon sooth'd him into gentleness,
With hand outstretched, and plausive word

His near approach I did invite,
Till won at length, he yielded quite,
And now beside the gate he greets his Royal lord!"

LV.

Tho' all unbroken we have brought
The stranger's story to its close,
With question keen and sudden thought
The Queen did often interpose;
When the black warrior's vengeful hand
Had stretch'd his foe on Dowill's strand,
Her voice in ruthless triumph scream'd,
With ghastly joy her features gleam'd;
But when, in mournful phrase, he said
How he poor Clifford's grave had made,
The languid Edward rais'd his head,
And, bending from his lowly bed,
Hid in the warrior's kind embrace
The tears that glisten'd on his face:
Nor did the Queen disdain a smile,
When his indignant tongue confest
The angry throbbings of his breast,

While prone, outstretched in durance vile,
He lay a baffled wight, by Rudolph's force oppress'd!

LVI.

Now slowly opes the cottage door!
'Tis the old shepherd from the moor,
And Gerald, who, not sent in vain,
Has led the lingerer home again:
Old Oswald now began to tell
The various troubles of the day,
How mid the flock some feeble fell,
While others stray'd so far away
That but the moon did lend her light,
Or he surprized had been by night.

LVII.

The shepherd-boy, who not till now
Beheld unhelm'd the stranger's brow,
Now met his eye,—in wild amaze,
With rolling orbs, awhile they gaze,
They stand, to speech and motion loth,
As if some spell enchain'd them both,

Nay, you might think,—such pale surprize
Glar'd from their wild and glassy eyes,
That, risen from the shades of night,
Some beckoning spectre met their sight!
Now Gerald's knees together smote,
Thick mists around his senses float,
Fainting he falls!—his form supine
The stranger's iron arms entwine,
While sobbing loud he cries, "Revive, my Geraldine!"

END OF CANTO THE THIRD.

NOTE TO CANTO THE THIRD.

Three times did gallant John de Vere.—Stanza XII. l. 5.

THE old Earl of Oxford the father, and Lord Aubrey Vere, the elder brother of this John Earl of Oxford, were attainted of high treason against the House of York, and beheaded on the same scaffold, Ann. Dom. 1441. This John de Vere was a long and faithful sufferer in the Lancastrian cause, and lived to be instrumental to the final subversion of the rival interest in the battle of Bosworth Field. His crest was a Star surrounded by rays. For information respecting this valiant and loyal nobleman, vide Fenn's Letters.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

I.

WHY, what a coil we mortals make
For wealth, and pow'r, and honour's sake,
And, how we run our rapid years
Thro' joys and sorrows, hopes and fears!
With beating pulse, and eager eye,
And throbbing bosom, on we fly
Along the pathway swept before
By crowds whose headlong course is o'er!
Alas! why need we run so fast?
Why need we pant and tremble so?

Alike, the nimble and the slow,
All reach the goal at last!
Of all the millions who have run
Life's rapid race beneath the sun,
None miss'd the goal—an equal meed
Or first, or last, rewards their speed,
In silence each receives his lot,
His heap of crumbling mould, and rests, and is forgot!

II.

Who can resolve, a stander-by,
To look upon the giddy chace,
And mark with undeluded eye
The humours of the race,
And wait till punctual time shall come
To take the calm spectator home?
None! The philosopher, who knows
Where soon the thriftless speed must close,
Marvels how others persevere,
Yet joins himself the swift career,
On with the whirling crowd he hies,
And, as he moralizes, flies.

Stay, restless heart! stay, toiling brain!
The prize for which ye run behold!—
A little mound of crumbling mould,
This is the earthly racer's gain!
At least, look upward as ye fly
And snatch a promise from the sky!

III.

The stranger to his iron breast
Tenacious strain'd the lifeless boy,
While all his varying face confest
A warfare strange of doubt and joy;
Now he the raven hair divides,
Whose thick and clustering curtain hides
The sheep-boy's russet brows,
And kiss'd the cold, unconscious face,
While down his manly cheek apace
The rapid rain-drop flows;
Nor shame, nor apathy, nor pride
Might then forbid the briny tide,
Uncheck'd it trickles down his cheeks;
'Tis still in tears that transport speaks!

With soothing, pleading voice he cries,
Tho' smother'd, half with stifling sighs,
"My Geraldine, revive! Sweet sister, ope thine eyes!"

IV.

But no! so still and cold she lay,
It seem'd as tho' she breath'd no more,
And, fill'd with terror and dismay,
The stranger snatch'd her from the floor,
And flinging wide the cottage door
Call'd the fresh night-breeze to his aid,
And bade it fan the lifeless maid;
And now the death-like slumbers fled,
And now she lifts her languid head,
A furtive glance of pale affright
Upon the sable Knight she threw,
Then shrinking, shuddering at his sight,
Her timid eyes withdrew.

V.

"Why dost thou take the precious form
Of him who perish'd in the storm?

Why dost thou come? the gulph profound
Roll'd all its waves that form around!
I saw them roll! I heard them roar;
I caught, amid the tempest's swell,
My brother's long and last farewel!
The surge clos'd o'er his head! Oh God! it op'd no more."

VI.

" Nay, Geraldine!—And if indeed
Thy brother slept beneath the wave,
Methinks thy danger, or thy need,
Would call him even from the grave!
And couldst thou view that sprite with loathing
Which ever in its mortal clothing
Clung round its sister and its friend,
Still bent to cherish and defend?
Alas! methought that helpless head
Had done with man's defence for aye,
And, rock'd by murm'ring billows, lay
Full many a fathom deep in ocean's oozy bed!"

VII.

" Yes! thou art Gerald! now I know
That mild fraternal voice again,
But silent, solitary woe
Had craz'd my feeble brain!
Alas! my brother! it was hard
To bear the grief no mortal shar'd,
And many an hour, since thou wert gone,
Poor Geraldine has wept alone!
Sure thou art alter'd! and thy front
More grim and stern than it was wont!
Hollow and dark, those eyes of thine,
So wont with youthful hope to shine,
Gaze sadly on thy Geraldine!
How art thou thriven in size and might!
Thy form has towr'd to manhood's height!
Oh Gerald! What a smile is there!
That smile tells not of joy!—its language is despair!"

VIII.

" Hush, Geraldine!—Whatever change
Affection's vigilance may trace,

Whate'er of transformation strange
Has mark'd my form and face,
Alas! but feebly they impart
The changes in my alter'd heart!
But smile, my sister! Ill it were
In blistering tears this hour to steep!
Smile, Geraldine! we need not fear,
We shall have time to weep!"

IX.

The lady now with timid eyes
Surveys abash'd her rude disguise,
Falters and shrinks and hangs her head,
Aw'd by the Queen's imperious look,
Her trembling hand as Gerald took,
And towards his Royal Mistress led;
They knelt; the Knight's revolting soul
The humble homage half-denied;
Well had he mark'd the haughty scowl
And with quick flash of jealous pride
His dark reproving eye replied,
The pulse so long by grief subdued

Now throbb'd, awaken'd and renew'd,
And not in vain his bosom swell'd;
Pride shrinks by answering pride repell'd.
With bright'ning brow the Queen inclin'd
Her lofty suppliant's pray'r to heed,
The smile, compliant, gracious, kind
Already speaks the soften'd mind,
For he who dares, shall always speed.

X.

" If in thy quarrel I have bled,
If on its dismal altar-stone
This rash and impious hand has shed
A life-drop dearer than its own!
By all I've lavish'd on thy part,
My blighted hopes,—my broken heart,—
Oh Lady! let thy royal bosom
Protect and shield this fragile blossom!
Foster'd by thy benignant hand
Its pale corolla shall expand,
E'en when, by life's rude tempest laid,
The kindred plant must cease to shelter and to shade!

XI.

" Yet hear me, Lady!"—and the glow
Of mounting blood suffus'd his brow,—
" Of Erin's noblest, proudest race
Our father stood amongst the best;
And the red stream that warm'd his breast
Thro' many an age he lov'd to trace,
Nor paus'd he, as he track'd its course,
Till he had found a royal source.
This maid is noble!—Nay, her dress,
Unseemly, rude, of rustic kind,
Ill hides the native nobleness
Within her soul enshrin'd!
The clear, bright spirit sparkles through
That dusky, dim, eclipsing hue:
Methinks that no disguise may shade
The grace, sublime yet mild, that decks the high-born maid!"

XII.

Margaret's mute answer well replied,
It sooth'd his heart, and calm'd his pride,

For, rising,—her majestic face
Bright with consoling smiles,—the Queen,
As with a mother's kind embrace,
Greeted the gentle Geraldine;
And haply, was about to pour
Of promises a gracious store;
But Edward, in impetuous tone
And hurried voice, the parley claim'd—
"When in the battle overthrown
And life and hope were almost gone,
Thy falchion to my rescue flam'd!
Mark well the vow, compos'd of breath
Thy gallant arm redeem'd from death!
By all the host of heaven I swear
With thee a brother's task to share!

XIII.

"Sweet maid! no rival sister's frown
Thy soft acceptance shall upbraid;
The love I offer is mine own,
Wilt thou reject it, noble maid?
Ours, lady, is a dangerous trade—

How oft must timid beauty see
The warlike, bold, and boastful trust
On which she leans, crush'd in the dust,
Struck down by ruthless destiny!
One brother!—'Tis a feeble stay
In battle's fierce, tumultuous day!
Nay, lady, answer not with tears;
Weep not, I would but bribe thy fears!"

XIV.

Who might deny when Edward sued?
His voice such mellow music own'd,
With forceful magic so endued,
Each heart, in pleas'd subjection bound,
Still waited fondly on the sound;
And if the Lady Geraldine
In silence, and in tears replied;
Whatever cause we may assign,
It was not scorn, it was not pride,
For Edward heard a grateful sigh
Low answering to his courtesy.
Why should we give the sophist praise

Who moulds and turns the subtle phrase,
Since ne'er his labour'd eloquence
Flow'd half so sweetly o'er the sense,
As that low tremulous sigh of virgin innocence?

XV.

But Margaret's darkening brow behold!
One glance may well suffice to tell
Within her bosom's troubled hold,
What rankling, restless passions dwell.
A smile, a ghastly, withering smile
Convulsive o'er her features play'd,
And her disdainful eye the while
With menace smote the noble maid;
Nor needed language to convey
What that dark, deadly look would say;
It spoke mistrust, and scorn, and hate,
And this, methinks, its import dread,—
"Oh! were I wing'd with sudden fate,
Swift should my lightning-bolt be sped,
Audacious stranger, on thine head;
For, meek and gentle as thou art,
Thy glance has fill'd with doubt a royal mother's heart!"

XVI.

She waited,—for they are but fools
Who break the pause till passion cools;
Then, in a pois'd and studied tone
Where pity and surprize contended,
And chidings mild, with soothings blended,
Bespake she her offending son:
“ Oh Prince! that wasting wound has spent
Such torrents of thy generous blood,
Methinks that in the ebbing flood
Some portion of thy soul had vent,
For thy high mind and manly sense
Seem dwindling into impotence!
Has pain so quell'd thy royal heart
That thou forgett'st what man thou art?
Or dost thou prize a lady's glove
An empire and a crown above?
Sickens thy spirit with thy frame?
Would thou wert of thy mother's mood!
Storm after storm *my* soul has stood,
Yet still amid the blast bright glows ambition's flame!”

XVII.

She paus'd, for like a pointed lance
She felt Sir Gerald's answering glance;
"Pardon, dread Lady! 'Tis man's pride,
His highest, worthiest, noblest boast,
The privilege he prizes most,
To stand by helpless woman's side,
Nor is he worthy of a crown
That privilege who would disown!
Nay, frown not, Lady! This poor maid
May found in blood a dreadful claim
E'en in a murder'd brother's name
Upon thy Royal house's aid!
Yea! writ in blood by this rash hand,
Her bond against thy soul shall stand,
If thou with hard neglect forget
My sister's heavy claim, her deeply-written debt!"

XVIII.

A light was in Sir Gerald's eye
Which reason own'd not,—'twas the glare,

Wavering, yet bright, of lunacy,
The rapid meteor of despair!
Now all was silent—Geraldine
In speechless horror trembling stood;
Her brother's stern, unwonted mien,
His dark and dismal speech I ween
Ran chilly thro' her blood!
Save him, on earth, no living thing
Had Geraldine whereon to cling,
None else to love and trust, yet now,
From the grim terrors of his brow
She shrank appall'd, for, of his eye
The unsocial language, did defy
E'en the meek cherub Sympathy!

XIX.

"What! dost *thou* tremble, Geraldine!
Oh! what a ruthless lot is mine!
One helpless, fragile thing to me
To shield and cherish fate has given,
No other refuge can she see
Beneath the wide expanse of heaven,

And I am mad! Oh that the wave
Roll'd o'er us both,—that fast asleep,
Rock'd by the cold and billowy deep,
All still and calm we lay in ocean's secret cave!

XX.

" Oh! when the demon and his train
Usurp it o'er my heart and brain,
All goes to wreck!—The ruthless fiend
Scatters each record to the wind !
Nor duty, then, nor love I know,
Sway'd by the wild blasts as they blow!
Then all is chaos, all a blot,
All that has been, or is, forgot,
All save that gory stain, that red and bloody spot!

XXI.

" Look on this hand—nay,—look again!
Can ye no stain of blood perceive?
Nay, then the fiends are in my brain,
And still my wandering sense deceive!
Methinks,—yet 'tis not so,—for ye

Have senses uncontroul'd and free,—
Methinks mine eyes can trace the stain
My brother's gushing life-stream left,
When, by this hand accursed cleft,
He fell, to rise no more, upon the crimson plain!"

XXII.

The Queen now urg'd him to disclose
The dreadful secret of his woes,
"Perchance," she cried, "the grief supprest
Lies all too heavy on thy breast;
Within the dungeon's unsunn'd cell,
Thick, noisome damps in darkness dwell,
But draw the bolts,—let air and light
The dungeon's darksome depths explore,
The fetid vapour wings its flight,
Disperses, and is felt no more!
Be not a niggard of thy care,
Open thy dreary heart and give thy sorrows air!"

XXIII.

"Alas, the tale I shall unfold
Will taint the genial breath of May,
Turn the kind hour of noontide cold,
And dim the bright and smiling day!"
Then, turning from the trembling maid,
As if to trust his strength afraid,
With steadied voice, and firmer mien,
Bespake he thus the listening Queen:

XXIV.

"We are of Erin! of a sire
Belov'd in hall, and fear'd in field,
Dreadful the menace of his ire,
And wide the shelter of his shield!
Such was our father! envious fate
Abridg'd too soon his glory's date,
And when for him the death-bell rung,
And when for him the mass was sung,
A widow'd wife's heaven-piercing cries
Mix'd with Lord Edric's obsequies!

XXV.

" Then were we three,—a bright-hair'd child
Methinks my sister yet I see,
As with a cherub lip she smil'd
A fondling on my mother's knee!
My mother's eye, so sad, yet kind,
Beams even yet upon my mind;
Her voice, like music's melting fall,
Memory methinks may yet recal,
When, blending censure and caress,
She check'd my boyhood's forwardness,
While I, well skill'd in urchin wile
Her meek displeasure to beguile,
My curly brow e'en while she chid
Within her gentle bosom hid,
Or slyly stole a glance to spy
If real anger fill'd her eye:—
Pardon, dread Lady!—memory fain
Would linger with the shadowy train,
Fair forms of innocence and bliss
Long, long ago engulph'd in time's profound abyss!

XXVI.

" My mother died—and years are fled
Since low in earth they laid her head,
And yet"—he paus'd, for passion's tide
His speech the wonted course denied,
He paus'd one moment,—and no more,
A silent struggle—quickly o'er!
" Of Edric's love the elder born
Had now full sixteen summers seen,
Bright was he as the blush of morn,
And pleasant, as the breath of e'en:
How oft in Edwin's form and face
Would our young hopes delight to trace
Our father's manly might, our mother's yielding grace!

XXVII.

" While Edwin sorrowing hung his head
Beside his mother's dying bed,
Bending on him her latest look
A relique from her breast she took,
And thus she said, ' Ere o'er my grave
Five winters' rushing storms shall rave,

Hie thou across the billowy brine
And seek Saint Jago's holy shrine,
And, as thou hold'st thy mother dear,
This sacred relique offer there,
So, shall my soul in peace arise
And bless thee from the distant skies!
But go not yet,—thy pious care,
Alas! those orphan babes require,
And rather mid the purging fire
My soul would wait for thee than they should rudely
fare!'

XXVIII.

" When o'er the lady Eva's tomb
Four winters' skies had shed their gloom,
And new-born birds on vernal spray
Hail'd the fifth bright and blooming May,
Fair breath'd the winds, the sky was blue,
The halcyon hover'd o'er the main,
Our brother wav'd a mute adieu
And steer'd away for distant Spain:
Then, Geraldine, did thou and I

Linger upon the pebbly strand
While we his tall ship might descry,
Then homeward wander'd, hand in hand,
With heavy heart and swimming eye:
Brief heaviness!—'Twas childhood's sorrow,
Which sobs itself to sleep, and all is well to-morrow!

XXIX.

" But childhood's woe, tho' slight and frail
As is the film upon the thorn
Whose thin web stretches o'er the vale
And glances in the early morn,
Hints but at heavier ills to come,
For manhood's breast is sorrow's home!
A neighbour Baron, fierce and bold,
The royal warrant did obtain
That he our youth in ward should hold
Till age mature should break the chain;
Safe, as beneath the eagle's care
The feeble, new-yean'd lamb would fare;
Safe, as the roosted hen would lie
When the false fox is lurking nigh;

So safe were we!—Sir Hubert's love
Watch'd o'er his helpless charge as vulture watcheth dove!

XXX.

" An adverse planet rul'd the hour
Which plac'd us in Sir Hubert's pow'r;
Long had his bosom, stern and dark,
In secret nourish'd hatred's spark!
Well might we find a guardian dire
In him, whose envy curs'd our sire!
He lov'd my mother,—if, indeed,
Love in his flinty breast might dwell,
She graced his love with little heed,
But he, her scorn remember'd well:
He look'd on those she left behind,
And vengeance brooded in his mind!

XXXI.

" How often have I mark'd him trace,
With eager gaze, each opening grace,
Which dawn'd upon my sister's face,
Then, turn him from th' unconcious maid

With eager haste, as tho' afraid,
Lest e'en our pure and sinless eyes
From that rude gaze might catch alarm,
Wake to the meditated harm,
And track his secret soul's unhallow'd mysteries!

XXXII.

"In distant climes a plant there grows,
Which from the touch its leaves will close,
And trembling, turn itself away,
If aught approach its fragile spray;
Its kindred plant, they say, abides,
Unseen, our northern clime beneath,
From every idle gaze it hides,
And shrinks at every ruder breath;
Amid the snows it thrives the best
Which guard the virgin's spotless breast,
'Tis Modesty! a lovelier flower
Than spring's first snow-drop, born mid February's
shower.

XXXIII.

" Soon Geraldine, by instinct taught,
Shrank from the Baron's near advance,
Her eye, with cold aversion fraught,
Repell'd his frequent glance;
Fearless at first, the ingenuous maid
Each movement of her heart betray'd,
But quickly was she doom'd to learn
To shudder at his aspect stern;
Too soon his threat'ning scowling glance
Disarm'd the youthful petulance;
Then from her cheek the roses fled
When first the task she learn'd, with hate to mingle dread.

XXXIV.

" But, Geraldine's was not the fear
Which in the abject bosom cow'rs,—
Her ivory brow began to bear
The impress stern of pride austere,
Her courage summon'd all its pow'rs;
The dimples fled, and in their place
Rose womanhood's maturer grace,

Her playful, lightsome, elfin tread
Which scarcely bow'd the daisy's head,
The music, which a merry heart
Did to an artless tongue impart,—
All, all was chang'd! and innocence
Rose aweful in its own defence!
Oh! how I gloried, when her pride
The tyrant in his wrath defied,
To see Lord Edric's spirit rise,
Resplendent, in his daughter's eyes!
Then, taught by her, I first began
To prize my native strength, and feel myself a man!

XXXV.

" Lord Edric's vassals all were gone,
Or lur'd, or threaten'd from our side,
And yet there linger'd only one
Who menace and who guile defied;
Old Connal in my father's tow'rs
Had travell'd on from youth to age,
And now life's dull and dusky hours
Were closing on his pilgrimage;

A strange and fearful man he was!
With shapes invisible he walk'd,
With tongues inaudible he talk'd,
And to his keen and gifted gaze
The secrets of the future day
Unshrouded, like the present, lay!

XXXVI.

"Old Connal long with wary heed
Had mark'd the Baron, and he knew
By many a token, safe and true,
When thought was ripening into deed:
Whether experience lent him lore
From past events, in days of yore,
Whether his pondering, toiling mind
By what had been the future read,
Or, that when blew the midnight wind,
With him, the spirits of the dead,
Unseen, held counsel, strange and dread,
It boots not, since he ne'er did bend
His wondrous lore to evil end;

And now, the schemes by malice plann'd
Lay frustrate and destroy'd beneath his feeble hand!

XXXVII.

" While all lay wrapp'd in sable fold,
One night, an hour ere midnight toll'd,
All silent and unseen we gave
Our fortunes to the bounding wave:—
We fled, since nought but sudden flight
Might shield us from our tyrant's might!
O'er the broad deep our path we took,
And calling Providence to aid,
Our guardian's dangerous towers forsook,
And to our native haunts a mournful farewel bade!

XXXVIII.

" The morning's bright and flaunting beam
Wak'd us from musings sad and strange,
As starting from some troubled dream,
Wildly we hail'd the wondrous change!
Year after year, the morning light
Had open'd on the self-same scene,

Or bleak and chill in wintry white,
Or cloth'd in summer's sprightly green,
'Twas still the same,—no change we knew
But of the season's shifting hue!—
A few swift hours, and all that was
Had shrunk and vanish'd from our gaze!
I turn'd on Geraldine mine eyes—
E'en she was wrapt in rude disguise!
Yet one heart-cheering smile there came
To tell me she was still the same,
A noble smile, meet to console,
And raise, and calm the troubled soul!
'My friend and brother by my side,
Howe'er unwonted or untried,
Whatever fortune sends, my courage shall abide!'

XXXIX.

"Deep wrapp'd in thought, we little reck'd
How thro' the lowering, sullen day,
Our frail bark labour'd on her way
While adverse winds her progress check'd;
But now, the day was well nigh done,

And wan and wat'ry set the sun,
And, as his farewel glance he gave
Sinking beneath the western wave,
Triumphant on his pitchy cloud
The storm's fell demon, yelling loud,
Loos'd all his blasts, and bade them sweep
The pale and agitated deep!
The night was closing,—overhead
A funeral canopy was spread,
And all beneath, the gulphy wave
Disclos'd a cold and hideous grave,
While the shrill winds, in chorus drear,
A dismal death-song pour'd on fancy's shuddering ear!

XL.

" The seamen's rude and boist'rous cries
Mix'd with the clamour of the skies,
As stubborn still the bark they urge
Against the wild opposing surge;
Tho' little skill'd, my share I took,
And eager, lent my humble aid,
And strove and labour'd as they bade

Till every hope our breasts forsook!
My sister!—Oh! if terror's pow'r
O'erwhelm'd me in that ghastly hour,
Chill'd the warm stream in every vein,
And bade distraction seize my brain,
It was for her!—all still she sate,
And having pour'd the inward pray'r,
Calm and submiss, expected fate
In resignation—not despair!
As to mine eyes the flash betray'd
E'en then, sublime and undismay'd,
In act devout the noble maid,
Methought that sure the ruffian storm
Relenting in its wrath would spare that angel form!

XLI.

" Helpless, before the tempest driving,
Our ruin'd bark the surface kept,
Against destruction feebly striving,
Not one delusive hope surviving,
When o'er the deck the cataract swept!

One frantic death-cry, wild and shrill,
Rose on the wailing blast,—we sank! and all was still!

XLII.

" Down, down we went!—strength, sense, and life,
All yielding in the horrid strife!
Down, down we went!—With furious roar,
Above, around the waters pour,
I heard, I saw, I felt no more!
Strong seated on the treacherous coast,
Where our ill-destin'd bark was lost,
An English Baron's massy tow'rs
Defied the threat'ning tempest's pow'rs;
The watchful warder did descry
Our struggling vessel's jeopardy;
And rapid to his summons flew,
Bred to the toil, a fearless crew,
Who from the wild, unpitying storm
And yawning gulph, redeem'd one victim's sinking form!

XLIII.

" Dripping and lifeless from the wave
The hardy vassals bore their prize
To glad their good old master's eyes,
Who liv'd but to protect and save;
Albeit, in youth a gallant part
Amid the warring world he bore,
Now, every hostile feeling o'er,
Age calm'd, but had not chill'd his heart,
And few can guess the blessed rest,
The soft and Sabbath smile that wrapt that old man's breast!

XLIV.

" Awhile on fair Lancastria's coast
I linger'd with my noble host;
The good old Baron, with delight,
Perceiv'd that time flow'd smoothly on,
While I, regardless of its flight,
Scarce felt that days and weeks were gone;
And now he smil'd and call'd me son,
For he was childless and alone!

XLV.

Meanwhile, e'en here the din of war
Burst on our slumbers from afar;
From time to time some wretched wight,
From adverse conflict hardly sav'd,
Wing'd hither his disastrous flight,
And shelter here and succour crav'd:
Lord Allen, to the Red Rose true,
Lov'd those who bore its colour best,
But kindly nature in his breast
Still rose to succour the distrest,
Nor only on the favourite hue
Shed pity's heart-reviving dew!

XLVI.

"The proud, the emulous, the bold
Full many a gallant story told,
And soon I burn'd to meet the foe.
And hear the deafening war-horn blow;
As yet my brow, all white and smooth,
Bore witness to inglorious youth,
But now my pulse beat quick to share
The manly bronze of toil, the valour-hinting scar!

XLVII.

"With grief Lord Allen heard me ask
What every noble youth may claim,
That with a knight's illustrious name
I too might seek the field of fame;
And now, to his reluctant task
He turn'd with sorrow, not with blame,
His own good sword, consign'd to rust,
Was rescued from ignoble dust,
And with the long neglected blade
Was knighthood on my shoulder laid!

XLVIII.

"Impetuous, panting to be gone,
My evil genius urg'd me on,
Another soul, a soul of flame,
Did seem to animate my frame,
As harness'd well, from helm to heel,
I prick'd me forth, a man of steel!
No raven croak'd, and not a cloud
Darken'd that morning's brilliant sky,
And all within, elate and proud,

Of triumph breath'd, and victory!
Each bough with promises was hung,
With hope's gay song the welkin rung,
And hope o'er all the scene her golden glances flung!

XLIX.

"'Twas now the season of the year
When heavy nods the ripen'd ear,
When honest labour's dewy brow
Is wont to brave the noontide glow,
Exulting while his peaceful toils
Are crown'd with autumn's tawny spoils;
But now the hoary carl no more
His rustic train to harvest led,
Plunder had reap'd the golden store,
Or, on the stalk, it withered!
Who once the guiltless scythe did wield,
Now fled, dismay'd by war's alarm,
Or, reaping in a bloody field,
Beheld a breathing harvest yield
Beneath his sturdy toil-strung arm!
Alas! in silence and dismay

The desolated hamlet lay,
No more the blue and wreathing smoke
At eve from cottage chimney broke,
Nor milk-maid on her homeward way
Pour'd o'er the twilight scene contentment's artless lay!"

L.

Sore groan'd the Prince, "Alas!" cried he,
"Alas! for England's misery!"
Sir Gerald paus'd—"My royal lord,
Might princely virtue expiate
A people's crimes, relenting fate
Would quickly sheathe th' avenging sword!
Might Crowned Holiness prevail
To change heaven's counsels and decrees,
Could Henry's meek implorings fail
Mysterious justice to appease,
That crimeless King, round whose meek brow
Fate's storms in all their fury blow?"

LI.

" Alas," replied the Queen, " too well
Our own disastrous wanderings paint
The virtues of the royal saint,
And all superfluous 'twere to tell
How mutter'd pray'r, and counted bead,
And monkish orisons succeed,
When grim rebellion, gaunt and fell,
Strides o'er the land with daring deed!
Heaven's cold approval may descend
On him who only lives to bend,
But life's experience still declares
Heaven's smile is with the wight who dares!
Proceed, Sir Knight, the impatient ear
Chides the digressing tongue which swerves in its career!"

LII.

" Not he who, toiling underneath
The fiery dog-star's raging beam,
Scarce fann'd by zephyr's lazy breath,
More panted for the quenching stream
Than I to gain the field of death,

To slake that burning thirst for fame
Which chang'd my blood to liquid flame!
Perverse and rash!—we little guess,
E'en as we touch the wish'd for brink
And bend our eager lips to drink,
The serpent spawn and deadly cress
Which in the dimpling waters hide,
And, unsuspected, taint the brisk and sparkling tide!

LIII.

" Blore Heath!—May never harrow come
O'er thy accurs'd, detested plain!
There, never wave the golden grain,
Nor ever may the jocund swain
Keep there the merry harvest-home!
On that day's deeds I need not dwell,
Alas! already have your eyes
Bedew'd that morning's miseries,
And each sad heart remembers well
The dismal hour when Audley fell!

LIV.

" Stoutly we strove, till hope declin'd
In every brave Lancastrian's mind,
No more to conquer then we fought,
That thought, that cheering thought was chill'd,
And now the prize for which we sought
Was death upon the hostile field!
Yet ill to strife like this enur'd,
My manly strength but half-matur'd,
And stung with sorrow and disdain
To find we had but striv'n in vain,
I paus'd a little while to breathe
And cast a hopeless look around that dismal heath!

LV.

" While thus I stood, for long before
My steed had dropp'd to rise no more,
A brook's refreshing murmurs stole
Like music o'er my harass'd soul;
I turn'd to seek the cooling tide
Resolv'd to taste it ere I died;

Alas! commission'd from on high,
That brook entic'd my steps, its voice was destiny!

LVI.

" Just as I gain'd the sparkling flood,
A martial form beside it stood,
Whose tow'ring mien and bearing bold,
A noble soldier's presence told:
' That rill,' he said, ' to toil and pain
Lends grateful solace!—Bright success
May only for awhile sustain
Man's feeble spirit!—Weariness
E'en Fortune's minions must confess!
Our task is over!' I perceiv'd
My badgeless coat his eye deceiv'd;
While, all unwittingly, his tongue
Thus with a victor's boast, a foe's proud bosom stung!

LVII.

" ' Thou dost mistake!—One struggle more
Awaits us ere our task is o'er!
Oh! ere yon glorious orb shall set,

One struggle for the Red Rose yet!'
'Alas! young Knight,' he cried, 'methinks
Too much of precious British blood
The mother soil already drinks!
If but hope's shadow linger'd yet
To nerve thine arm and edge thy sword,
I am no recreant, and my word
Should ne'er oppose thy gallant will!'

LVIII.

" 'What! thinkest thou to see me led
Thy rebel party's scorn and mock,
Meekly to lay my captive head
An offering on your tyrant's block!
Oh no! that felon lot to shun
I'll perish with my armour on!'

LIX.

" 'Brave youth, be rul'd! Seem but to yield,
Quit thou this blood-stain'd heath with me,
This night my voice shall be thy shield,
To-morrow thou shalt wander free!'

A fatal fire was in my heart;
Lit by the Furies; 'From my grasp,'
I cried, 'this sword shall ne'er depart
Till I have breath'd life's latest gasp!
And yet, methinks, I too would fain
From slaughter and from toil refrain;
And since to thee it seems not vile
To yield up liberty awhile,
Give me *thy* sword and purchase peace,
And do thou follow me, and let our parley cease!'

LX.

"His soul was rouz'd: 'Insulting boy!
I would have spar'd thee!—Heaven record
How all unwilling to destroy,
Provok'd, I lift the sated sword,
Which, to the hilt in slaughter dyed,
Appeas'd, would fain have turn'd aside
And shunn'd the useless homicide!"

LXI.

" We fought:—and tho' the stranger's brand
Seem'd wielded with a veteran's hand,
Tho' all my strokes were spent in air,
Incens'd I saw his skilful care
Was bent his foeman's life to spare:
I paus'd—'Come on, Sir Knight,' I cried,
'By heaven! thou holdest me at bay!
I cannot brook thy scornful pride,
Mock not a man with childish play!'
Again we strove,—a mortal stroke
The stranger's brittle cuirass broke!
Backward he reel'd, and from his side
Impetuous rush'd the boiling tide;
Oh! why do I survive to tell,
The stroke was death!—The stranger fell!

LXII.

" Then, all too late, wrath's wasteful flame
Expir'd extinguish'd and suppres,
And a still voice within my breast
Did greet me with the murderer's name!

The Fury, which had urg'd me on,
Forsook me when her work was done.
Now by the fallen warrior's side
I knelt, and gently rais'd his head
From off its cold and bloody bed,
And many a fruitless aid supplied;
And, eager in the futile task,
I flung aside the heavy casque,
And vainly hop'd the evening breath
Would chase away the damps of death!
I met the stranger's lifted eye,
It beam'd forgiveness; yet, methought,
With heaven's blue bolt that glance was fraught!
I turn'd me shuddering from his look,
The solid earth beneath me shook,
I shriek'd 'My brother!'—Oh! my hand
Was with a brother's life-blood stain'd,
And my accursed sword its noble source had drain'd!"

LXIII.

Sir Gerald paus'd awhile, to chace
The anguish drops that bath'd his face;

His sister, whose misgiving breast
Too well the dreadful sequel guess'd,
Mistrustful of her strength, had gone
To weep each brother's lot alone,
And Edward groaning cried, "For me
That England's wreath *my* brow may clasp,
To place a sceptre in *my* grasp,
How many a gallant soul is plung'd in misery!"

LXIV.

"Here," said the Queen, "thy story close,
And draw the curtain o'er thy woes,
And let this thought suffice to soothe
Thy wounded spirit, noble youth;
That hand which in a nation's cause
The patriot's sacred weapon draws,
Obeys an impulse far above
The little claims of private love,
And duty's voice imperative
Far from the hero's breast each selfish thought should drive!"

LXV.

"Not all the glory, all the praise
Which decks the prosperous hero's days,
The shout of man, the laurel crown,
The pealing echoes of renown,
May conscience' dreadful sentence drown!
No trophy of the patriot's pride
Could ever teach me to abide
That never-ceasing cry, 'Woe to the fratricide!'

LXVI.

"Oh! when my dying brother found
What hand had dealt the fatal wound,
And when he saw the frantic woe
Which tortur'd his unnatural foe,
The hero melting into man
Swift down his cheeks the big drop ran;
'Oh Gerald! while mine eyes can see,
Oh! quick that envious helm unbrace!
Alas! I yearn to look on thee,
And gaze once more upon thy face!

Where is our sister?'—'Drown'd!' I cried,
'And would to God my bones lay bleaching by her side!'

LXVII.

" 'Cheer thee, my brother! Fate, not thou,
Kindly remits my task below!
But if that dying voice is dear
Which now sounds faintly on thine ear,
Thou single column! if in thee
Abides one spark of native flame,
I charge thee, by our ancestry,
Support our venerable name!
Our house leans on thee!—if *thou* fail,
The ancient fabric nods and falls,
For ever sink its aged walls,
And in the grass-grown courts the desert blast shall wail!

LXVIII.

" 'Thy courage, even as a foe,
Had my heart's reverence while we strove,

Think how that heart must hail thee now,
Oh! brother of my pride and love!
Thy part is chosen,—hie thee on
While aught remaineth to be done,
And turn thou not! In one career
Be steadfast still, and persevere,
So shall renown thy struggles bless,
For honour shines on steadiness!
Come nigh, my Gerald!—for I feel
I must not look upon thee long,
Death's mist will soon mine eye-lids seal,
Death's frost will soon enchain my tongue,
Thou precious relique of our race,
My soul would wing her flight from thy belov'd embrace!"

LXIX.

" Even to the last his failing sight
Dwelt on my face with strange delight,
And even to the final gasp
His bloodless arms my form did clasp!—
Till then, methought 'twas all a dream;
But when at length he ceas'd to speak,

And when I felt his frozen cheek,
I started from the ground with wild and piercing scream!

LXX.

" But what imports it now to tell
What next my wretched frame befel?
Suffice it, that I live to shew
How long the victim may survive,
His heart while hell-born tortures rive;
Against the springs of life, how slow
The poison works of human woe!"

END OF CANTO THE FOURTH.

NOTES TO CANTO THE FOURTH.

That crimeless king, round whose meek brow.—Stanza L. l. 11.

"In both states," (prosperity and adversity,) "he was patient and vertuous, that hee may be a patterne of most perfect vertue, as hee was a worthy example of fortune's inconstancy: he was plaine, upright, farre from fraud, wholly given to prayer, reading of scripture and almes-deedes; of such integrity of life that the Bishop whiche had beene his confessor tenne yeere, avoucheth, that hee had not all that time committed any mortall crime. So farre was hee from covetousnesse, that when the executors of his uncle the Bishop of Winchester, surnamed the rich Cardinal, would have given to him two thousand pound, hee plainely refused it, willing them to discharge the Will of the departed. He was so religiously affected, that on principal holydaies he would weare sacke-cloth next his skin. Oath he used none, but in most earnest matters these words, "Forsooth, and forsooth." Hee was soe pitiful that when comming from St. Albon's, hee saw the quarter of a traytor against his crowne, over Cripplegate, he willed it to be taken away with these words, "I will not have any christian so cruelly handled for my sake!" Many great offences he willingly pardoned, and receiving at a time a great blow by a wicked man which compassed his death, hee only said, "Forsooth and forsooth, yee doe fouly to smite a King anoynted so!"—Of his owne naturall inclination, hee abhorred all the vices, as well of the body as of the soule.—Stow's Annals, page 425.

Blore Heath!—May never harrow come.—Stanza LIII. l. 1.

"The Queen appointed Sir James Touchet Lord Audeley (because his power lay in those parts) to raise an host of men, and to give battaile to the same Earle (Salisbury) if he saw cause and place convenient: she allied unto her all Knights and Esquiers of Chestershire for to have their favour: she held open household among them and made her sonne the Prince to give a livery of swans to all the gentlemen of that country, and to many other through the land. Lord Audeley had the leading of them into the field called Blore Heath near unto Mucklestone, by the which the Duke of York and Earle of Salisbury must needs passe.—There both hosts met, and fought a mortall battell, wherein the Lord Audeley was slain, with Hugh Venables of Kinderton, Thomas Dutton of Dutton, Richard Molyneux of Seston, William Troutbeck, John Legh of Booth, John Donne of Tikington, and John Egerton of Egerton, Knights, &c.—But the greatest losse fell on them of Chestershire who had received the Prince's livery of Swans."—Stow's Annals, page 405.

Blore Heath, celebrated for the defeat of the Lancastrians under James Touchet Lord Audley by the Yorkist army led by the Earl of Salisbury, now forms part of the property of Sir John Chetwode, Bart. of Oakley in Staffordshire, in whose grounds much of the field of battle is enclosed, whereon is standing, in excellent preservation, a Funeral Cross, erected apparently in commemoration of the Lancastrian leader, as his name only is mentioned on the tablet.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE FIFTH.

I.

THERE be who, murm'ring as they go,
With heavy step life's path-way tread,
In vain for them, with golden glow
The bright sky sparkles overhead,—
They look not up! For them in vain
The vernal scene, the daisied plain,
The breath of May, the woodland strain!
For them in vain! whose eyes intent
With grovelling gaze to earth are bent!
In vain for them the seasons roll,

With winter ever in their soul;
While towards the final bourn they fare,
Care clings to them, and they to care!
What do they know of life? They know
That toil and trouble dwell below,
They know that weariness and gloom
And strife walk with them to the tomb;
They thank not heaven,—for heaven's smile
Beams warmth upon the world, unfelt by them the
while!

II.

They know not, that, of heavenly birth,
With mortal man there walks on earth
A pow'r, which to their twilight day
Light, warmth, and rapture could impart,
And melt the wintry snows away
Which hang about the sullen heart!
They know not love! love's sighs and tears,
Love's doubtings, tremblings, hopes and fears,
Love's very pangs expand the breast
And lend dull life its noblest zest!

That heart which in love's kindling smile
Has never deign'd to bask awhile,
That sullen heart may well complain,
Scarce has it liv'd,—or liv'd in vain!

III.

While Edward trac'd with speechless heed
The gallant stranger's hapless lot,
His mind from selfish sorrows freed
Awhile its own sad cares forgot,
His smarting wounds' incessant throes,
And e'en his bosom's mightier woes,
All, in a stranger's griefs ingross'd,
Awhile forgotten were and lost;
Upon Sir Gerald's mournful tongue
A charm of wondrous virtue hung,
Thro' Edward's throbbing heart it sent
A strange and mingled sentiment,
It glided swift thro' every vein,
And scarcely could he tell, if pleasure 'twere, or pain!

IV.

His captive fancy dwelt enslav'd
Upon that meek, celestial form,
Who, while around the tempest rav'd,
Sate calm amid the howling storm,
On her, who 'mid the forked fire,
Thro' yawning waves by tempests driven,
Could from that conflict wild and dire
To her own spotless heart retire
And commune, undismay'd, with heaven!
He deem'd this sublunary sphere,
Of thing so noble, own'd but one,
And thought, how bless'd that mortal were
Who call'd that perfect thing his own!

V.

Ambition and his pompous train,
Thrones, empires, flitted from his mind,
And to his heart and to his brain
Came hope with her illusions vain;
And trembling joy, and pleasing pain
Were in the wond'ring soul enshrin'd;

For new-born love still leads along
Of painted forms a numerous throng,
A welcome group of dear deceits,
Fond fantasies, and smiling cheats!
Edward had felt the generous glow
That wakens at the trumpet's sound,
And, when the helmet press'd his brow,
Had felt his pulse to battle bound;
Much had he learn'd, yet knew he not
Till now the wonders of that pow'r,
Who can transform the wretch's lot
And dress with beams the darkest hour,
Can agony to bliss translate,
And in the sinking heart, create
New wishes, and new hopes, and almost conquer fate!

VI.

The Prince in silence lay resign'd
To blissful musings, while the Queen
Rejoic'd that slumbers so serene
Refresh'd his frame and calm'd his mind:
But now the wasting taper tells

That half the night is worn away,
And sleep each weary wight compels,
With gentle force, to own his sway;
The good old pair, whose lowly lot
Misfortune deign'd not to molest,
Such little cares had long forgot
As wont to haunt the rustic breast;
They seldom own'd that wayward pow'r
Which troubles slumber's peaceful hour,
And bids the sleeper act again
Day's task of labour and of pain;
The tranquil mind, the vacant breast,
The simple brain unvex'd by schemes,
Alone may taste that placid rest,
Those precious slumbers, balmy, blest,
By fever's start unbroke, unvisited by dreams.

VII.

Peace! modest Peace! the sons of earth
From thy meek form indignant turn,
They view with scorn thy boastless worth,
And at thy humble offering spurn;

Ambition knows thee not, and pride
Would blush to see thee at her side!
Nay, what have we with peace to do!
We tell of ruin and of woe;
And, as our daring hand we fling
Impetuous o'er the echoing string,
Disaster and reverse, and waste and war we sing!

VIII.

The day begins.—The Carl is gone
To tend his fleecy charge alone,
The sun-burnt boy, who us'd to share
The good old shepherd's daily care,
Transform'd is to a lady fair!
And Oswald, whistling on his way,
Bethinks him how for many a day
That little sheep-boy's ditty wild,
Floating across the broomy heath
And mingling with the summer breath,
His toil of weariness beguil'd;
"Well, well," he cried, "I lov'd the child;

But what of that!—All here, they say,
Is giv'n but to be ta'en away!"

IX.

Now scarcely was old Maudlin gone
On halting steed to market town,
Than Geraldine, from brief repose
On rushen couch, refresh'd arose;
Lightly she sprang across the floor
And cautious op'd the creaking door,
And sought her brother, who was laid
Recumbent in the beechen shade:
He slept,—yet sorrow at his heart,
E'en as he slept, seem'd busy still;
The sudden, strong, convulsive start,
The smother'd groan, and shuddering thrill,
Declar'd that gentle sleep in vain
Would lighten misery's galling chain.
As Geraldine beside him stood,
And gaz'd upon the noble wreck
Of all that once was fair and good,
Her pitying tears in rapid flood

Bedew'd her brother's livid cheek;
Then, kneeling on the verdant sod,
She lifted up her heart to God!

X.

On deep and earnest pray'r intent
She knew not how the moments went;
Thrice had she counted every bead,
When sudden sounded on her ear
The heavy hoof of coming steed,
And spoke some strange intruder near;
Starting she rose, averse that eye
Her secret worship should espy:
Now Maudlin from her steed alighted,
Along the narrow path advanc'd,
Her mind with wondrous weight seem'd freighted,
Her eye with strange impatience glanc'd,
And as she stood amid the glade,
With cautious mien as if afraid,
And many a mute, mysterious sign,
She call'd the wondering Geraldine;—

In silence Geraldine obey'd
And follow'd thro' the closing shade.

XI.

Nor comet's blaze, nor shooting star,
Nor armies striving in the air,
More fearful portents were, I ween,
Than Maudlin's silence,—for alone
Or social, still from morn till e'en
Pray'd, sung, or talk'd the unwearied crone;
But now, in vain the astonish'd maid
One little word to win, with earnest speech essay'd.

XII.

Yet soon they halt;—a moss-grown shed
Rear'd in their path its humble head,
The ivy and the wall-flow'r dress'd
In gaudy tints the verdant nest,
Its trembling shade the mountain ash
Flung o'er it,—and beside it fled
A narrow rill, whose current rash
Dash'd wildly o'er its rocky bed.

XIII.

They entered, and beheld the floor
With virgin vestments scatter'd o'er,
Kirtle, and coif, and wimple white,
And hat of straw with ribbons dight,
And mittens green, and buckles bright;
Nor lack'd the shining brooch to hold
The decent kerchief's snowy fold,
Nor miss'd there 'mid the rustic weed
Aught that a village maid might need:
Bright did the glancing tear-drop shine
In the blue eye of Geraldine,
In sign of thankfulness it fell,
And Maudlin knew its meaning well;
Unskill'd in courtly phrase, or smooth,
As her heart bade, her tongue replied,
And in the homely phrase of truth,
"Sure thou art welcome, child," the honest matron cried.

XIV.

That artless welcome gave away
The thrift of many a lab'ring year,

Hard earn'd by many a weary day
Of frugal fare and toil severe!
When greatness gives, from forth his store
He takes a little, and his meed
Is flattery's song, which o'er and o'er
To the wide world proclaims the deed!
But this was all! life's autumn past,
And strength and spirit failing fast,
And winter nigh, she hop'd no more
To renovate her little store!—
'Twas the heart's gift, as freely given
As to the thirsty plain the blessed rain from heaven!

XV.

The stream which fled so swiftly by,
Sparkling and murmuring in its race,
Soon from the lady's bright'ning face
Dismiss'd the dun and dusky dye
Which hid beneath it purer snow
Than winter heaps on Skiddaw's brow;
Tints, from the blush-rose stol'n, shine
On the fair cheek of Geraldine,

And as she quits her loath'd disguise
New lustre trembles in her eyes:
The crone uplifts her wither'd hands
Marv'ling as each new grace expands,
And half suspects some angel guest,
In mortal semblance hid, her lowly roof had bless'd.

XVI.

How proudly beat the sculptor's heart
Exulting in triumphant art,
When, rais'd by his creative hand,
He saw the marble Venus stand,
Upspringing from the shapeless stone,
The pride, the magic, all his own!
Thus proud, old Maudlin's eye survey'd,
Beneath her ministry, the maid
Her sex's garb, her native bloom,
Her own rose-tinted hue and lovely form assume!

XVII.

Each tress, its coal-black hue resign'd,
Light waves of floating gold display'd,

Bright in the morning glance they shin'd
And o'er her cheek and bosom stray'd ;
Yet pass'd a cloud o'er Maudlin's joy,
As, vainly on the lady's face
She sought with earnest heed a trace
Of him so well-belov'd, her tawny shepherd-boy !

XVIII.

The mystery over, from the shed
Where silently the change was wrought,
Smiling the blushing maid she led,
And now her guests impatient sought;
By her own honest, ardent breast,
What pass'd in other hearts she guess'd,
And much she yearn'd, in other eyes
To reap the meed of glad surprize :
The dazzling sun had pour'd his light
On the young warrior's glancing mail,
And, startled by the summons bright,
From mossy pillow sprang the Knight
To bid the glorious morning hail ;
The long, long exil'd smile is fain

To visit his wan cheek again
As his fraternal arms entwine
His sister's form, exclaiming, "Now,
My own, my earliest friend I know!
Now, thou art she indeed! my very Geraldine!"

XIX.

Gazing upon his sister's face,
Back rush'd his wayward thoughts to trace
Full many a form for ever flown,
Alive to memory's eye alone!
Long mus'd he not,—for lo! the Queen
Recals him to the present scene!
Awhile upon the alter'd maid
Her royal glances coldly stay'd,
Then, frowning, she in haste withdrew
As from some hated thing her view;
She look'd, as if an adder lay
Hissing and coiling in her way!
Looks kill not, but they can destroy
With fatal blight the buds of joy,—

Had Margaret's glance the pow'r to kill,
How had the wasted world deplor'd her deadly skill!

XX.

"Why stand ye here while England's heir
Awaking claims your duteous care?
Such ministry, as hands unskill'd,
Untaught, and inexpert, may yield,
Haste and bestow! but,"—and a smile
Malignant curl'd her lip the while,
"Take thou good heed, lest thou forget
Thou dost but pay a subject's debt!"

XXI.

Poor Geraldine!—In vain she tried
The conflict in her soul to hide
Of love insulted,—wounded pride!
She dash'd aside the coward tear,
But now the white rose, now the red
The lady's changing cheek did wear,
As pride and weakness combated;
For still within her breast enshrin'd

With woman's softness, she combin'd
Such firm and lofty thoughts as suit the high-born mind!

XXII.

With throbbing heart the wounded maid
In silence towards the cottage turn'd,
Her secret soul indignant spurn'd
The haughty mandate she obey'd,
For love and all his flatt'ring train
Fled frighted at the royal frown,
And Geraldine in high disdain
Would fain the lurking guest disown:
Meanwhile the Prince impatient lies
Counting the minutes with his sighs,
And eager watching while the sand
With slow and measur'd progress wan'd;
But see, he starts! for nigh the door,
The long expected step proclaims his watching o'er!

XXIII.

'Tis not the little shepherd-boy
With sun-burnt cheek, and ebon hair,

And down-cast glances, bright yet coy,
The rustic's humble, timid air!
Edward's keen eye impatient fell
Upon the entering stranger's mien,
But felt the *same* resistless spell,
And own'd his heart's elected queen!
She who, eclips'd by strange disguise,
Already sway'd his bosom's throne,
How did his kindling fancy prize
When bursting on his gaze in native grace she shone!

XXIV.

He who admires, in polish'd phrase
His mind's approval may declare,
His fluent tongue his thought obeys,
And decks, in fairer tints, the fair!
He who *adores*, can ne'er find speech
His soul's idolatry to reach!
The worship of the imploring eye,
The timid heart-betraying sigh,
These, swifter than the viewless wind,
Th' unerring couriers are, which post from mind to mind!

XXV.

But idly now their tale they tell,—
For Geraldine bethinks her well
Of her high source, and noble name,
And startled pride's indignant flame
Is on her cheek;—the azure light
Which o'er the senses softly stole,
Whose temper'd radiance, mild yet bright,
Shone but to heal and to console,
Now, cold as wintry sun-beams fall
On the hoar top of mountain tall,
Or as the moon, when from her height
She looks upon the world below,
And sees her own pale, shimmering light
Reflected in December's snow,
So stern, so cold, so wintry, shine
The late benignant eyes of Lady Geraldine!

XXVI.

With mingled lowliness and pride
Her mute obeisance duly paid,
Her humble ministry she plied

E'en as the haughty Margaret bade,
While her averted glances shun
The troubled gaze of Margaret's son,
Lest they might teach her to forget
She "did but pay a subject's debt!"

XXVII.

The Prince at length, with mournful speech,
Timid, bespake his lovely leech:
"Lady! beneath thy gentle care
My outward wound is closing fast,
Nay, even now its pangs are past,
And well the irksome toil may spare
Of one so noble, and so fair!
Oh lady! let thy hand resign
To humbler ministry a task unmeet for thine!"

XXVIII.

The lady lifted not her eyes
While slowly, thus her tongue replies,
"My royal lord! such duteous aid
As simple loyalty may give,

To lend, becomes a subject maid,
And well befits thee to receive!
Nay, wert thou lowliest in the land
Which thou art destin'd to command,
Unnurtur'd, poor, of peasants born,
Think'st thou a christian maid should scorn
To yield that succour all may claim
From one who boasts a christian's name?
If then, from an untimely grave
'Tis bliss the meanest life to save,
Well may she thank indulgent heaven,
To whose unskilful cares a nation's hope is given!"

XXIX.

Deep sigh'd the Prince: "Alas!" cried he,
"E'en with this precious boon of life,
What hours of sorrow and of strife,
Oh lady! hast thou given to me!
How many nights are yet to spend
In anxious vigils! From mine eyes
What drops of anguish must descend,
What weary, health-consuming sighs

This sorely burthen'd heart must rend,
Ere I have struggled to the end!
E'en now, mid yonder village dead,
Methinks 'twere sweet to rest my head!
Then, might the White Rose chaplet wave
Triumphant o'er my quiet grave,
York's hostile badge, the rose of snow,
In pledge that he who slept below
In stainless youth had left a world of crime and woe!"

XXX.

"Oh Prince! and wouldst thou thus betray
The glorious post, the station high
Where thou art plac'd by destiny,
So early on the battle-day!
'Tis morn with thee! ere night descends
Thou hast a brave career to run,
And when thy race of glory ends,
In splendour shalt thou cease, as sets the golden sun!"

XXXI.

" Bless'd prophetess! Oh that mine eye
Could pierce the clouds that round me roll,
Whose vapours quench my spirit high
And hang about my aspiring soul!
What art thou, lady? At thy sway
The body's keenest tortures cease!
Thy voice my inmost thoughts obey
And rouze for war, or sink to peace!
E'en now, my heart-pulse feebly beat
Oppress'd beneath the gathering gloom;
And, as amid the battle's heat,
The coward seeks some sure retreat,
I turn'd me tow'rds the shelt'ring tomb,
But wak'd by thy resistless charm
My heart leaps up, and hopes again,
I feel my blood to combat warm
As at the war-horn's shrill alarm,
And long to rush in arms amid the embattled plain!"

XXXII.

By terror and delight assail'd
And scarcely conscious which prevail'd,
Fair Geraldine at once beheld
Her royal captive's heart reveal'd,
She knew that in a magic snare
She held the thought of England's heir!
Some joy there is, whose sudden force
O'erwhelms like anguish, and o'erthrows
The astonish'd spirits in its course
Till reason scarce her office knows;
So fares it now with Geraldine;—
A thousand streams of wavering light
Flash quick before her dazzled sight,
And with bewild'ring lustre shine;
While hoping half, and half-afraid,
Edward, with anxious gaze, beheld the trembling maid!

XXXIII.

The blushing morn, the twilight pale,
Noon's blaze intense, night's sable veil,
Each in its turn had three times past

Over the cottage in the dale
Since bold Sir Gerald told his tale;
And many an eager look was cast
Up tow'rds the steepy path in vain
To see if Rudolph came again,—
Rudolph came not,—nor came there aught
But gales with songs and fragrance fraught,
The carol of the full-voic'd thrush,
The fragrance of the hawthorn bush,
But nought that might direct the aimless glance of thought.

XXXIV.

But not in vain the moments sped,
Wing'd with returning health they came,
And, springing from his lowly bed,
Edward uplifts his royal head
Exulting in his strengthening frame:
Once more the late enfeebled hand,
Impatient, grasp'd the pond'rous brand,
And, as he view'd the glittering blade,
Thus to himself the hero said:

"On my last field I fought and fail'd,
For then Ambition led me on,
I fought for vengeance and a throne,
I fought in vain,—the foe prevail'd!
Now, more than empire, more than glory,
More than a deathless life in story,
Beckons me forward! For success
My bosom's fondest hopes shall bless,
And who shall bid him turn, who fights for happiness?"

XXXV.

One evening when the vesper-bell
Toll'd sullen from the distant tow'r,
When twilight's misty, musing hour
Dim o'er the shelter'd valley fell,
What time the white owl wings her way
From ivied nook in turret grey,—
The Queen, who long absorb'd had seem'd
In thought, like one who waking dream'd,
Starting cried, "Rudolph! may it be!
For he, or some less welcome comes than he!"

XXXVI.

All listen'd eager, for, indeed,
The heavy trampling hoof of steed
Close to the opening of the dell,
On every ear that listen'd fell.
The Prince cried, " Be he friend or foe,
We are not unprepar'd to shew
Such welcome as the brave bestow!"
He spake, and wav'd his faulchion bright,
And tow'rds the narrow path-way sprung,—
But Erin's keen and gallant knight
His form before his master flung,
" What! rash as the remorseless wind,
Prince! wilt thou never bear in mind
The debt thou ow'st to human kind,
Thus to expose so dear a life
To some night-prowling ruffian's knife!
Nay, pardon me,—'twere treason now
To stagger at the frown that clouds thy royal brow!"

XXXVII.

As thus they strove in generous wrath,
Lo! dimly in the twilight seen,
A form descends the narrow path
With footsteps slow, and harmless mien!
The cowled head, and mantle grey,
And cord-encircled waist, profess
That he who hither wends his way,
Has vow'd to live in holiness;
Yet when he saw the glittering brand
Which flash'd in either warrior's hand,
Starting, it seem'd as tho' he sought,
By some mysterious impulse sway'd,
To grasp in haste the opposing blade,
But, checking such vindictive thought,
Unmeet for holy breast, I ween,
Calmly he view'd the bounded scene
And cross'd his bosom, and bestow'd
His "Benedicite" on all who there abode!

XXXVIII.

The Prince the greeting meek repaid,
And, smiling, sheath'd the useless blade,
And bade the wandering Carmelite
To shelter from the coming night:
Not so Sir Gerald, for his breast
Mistrusted sore the holy guest,—
" Heaven grant," he pray'd, " yon muffling cowl
Hide not the brow of traitor foul!
Heaven grant yon folded stole within
Lurk not the secret man of sin!
Good father, bear thee warily!
I do suspect thee, and mine eye
With comment close and keen shall track thy subtlety!"

XXXIX.

Entering the cot, the friar told
How as the bleak and barren wold
He with uncertain footstep trac'd,
Much fearing lest the night should close
Ere he had pass'd the unknown waste,
And just as he began to lose

All hope of shelter and repose,
A man, uncouth in garb and mien,
O'ertook him in that cheerless scene;—
" Secure in humble poverty
I hail'd him as he gallop'd nigh;
He brought me hither,—when his steed
Is from th' encumb'ring harness freed,
He will appear, for he doth bear
Message of import high to some who tarry here!"

XL.

" 'Tis Rudolph!"—the impetuous word
Burst from each lip with glad accord:
" 'Tis Rudolph!" said the musing Knight,—
" Good father, many a one had fain
Roam'd trackless o'er the dusky plain
Ere they had rouz'd so grim a wight!
Aye, e'en tho' winter's fleecy wreath
Were driven across the howling heath!
Why should'st thou tremble lest a night
So soft, so calm, so heavenly mild
It might not chill a naked child,

Should catch thee 'mid the broomy wild!"
"Tremble!" so loud the echo came,
Its strong vibration shook each wondering listener's
frame!

XLI.

'Twas true, from forth the Friar's hood
Sudden that thundering echo came!
But silent now, and sad, he stood,
As if rebuk'd by inward blame:
All marvell'd, but Sir Gerald's heart
Exulted in defeated art,
Yet rested satisfied to know
How near him lurk'd th' insidious foe,
And Rudolph's entrance put to flight,
Save in the breast of Erin's Knight,
All thoughts but those with which suspense
Greets him whose tongue is fraught with dear intelligence!

XLII.

"Oh, welcome! welcome!" Margaret cried
While hope and gladness lit her glance,
"Oh! say whate'er thine eye has spied!
Or be it good, or evil chance,
All may be borne save ignorance!"

XLIII.

"Soft, Lady! while I count the gold
For which this lucre-loving hand
Thou and thy royal heir has sold
To yon young tyrant and his band!"
"I wrong'd thee, Rudolph! Come! No more!
Ah! quick, I charge thee, friend, unlock thy bosom's
store!"

XLIV.

"What chance first met me on my way,
Methinks it needeth not to say,
Albeit, yon Knight, for memory's sake,
May yearn to hear the story told
How on a spectre grim and bold

One dazzling morn his eyes did wake!"*
The Prince arose, "Rudolph, forbear!
We may not brook thy contumely!
It would become thy speech to wear
A meeker purport, in the ear,
The sacred ear of Majesty!
Respect the Queen! and let thy tongue
Forbear with bitter sneer to do a hero wrong!"

XLV.

Like one accustom'd to command,
The Prince, reseated, wav'd his hand,—
"Rudolph, proceed! for much we long
To hear of that dispersed throng,
The loyal, generous few, who yet
Cleave to the true Plantagenet!"
Rudolph, surpriz'd, perus'd the face
Of him from whom the mandate came,
There, mingled with youth's softest grace
Of majesty an awful trace,
Lit by a spark of anger's flame;
Never till now had Rudolph's ear

Heard of reproof the voice austere,
Awhile he stood with eye-lids wide,
Gazing upon the Prince, then, wond'ring why, complied!

XLVI.

"The moon had risen, when mid the slain
I stood alone on Livel's plain!
The waning moon!—like meteor red
It hung above the scatter'd dead
Who slept on that uncurtain'd bed!
Full oft of pity and of fear
I've heard, unweeting what they were;
I knew them never,—save that now
A strange, bewildering, shudd'ring thrill,
A sudden touch of wintry chill
Struck to my heart and damp'd my brow!
Beshrew me! for awhile I stood
Irresolute in coward mood,
Eying that dismal scene of silence, death and blood!

XLVII.

" My halt was short, for on I rush'd
Along the red and slippery way,
Trampling on many a gallant gay
Who there outstretch'd and silent lay
Beneath my reckless footstep crush'd!
Yet not alone of living things
Among those ghastly heaps I stood;
For there the raven pois'd her wings
And revell'd in a feast of blood,
While hovering o'er the silent corse
She shriek'd a death-song wild and hoarse;
And stealing to his banquet foul
Shrill came the night-dog's hungry howl;
Nor only these, for *she* was there,
Of whom the feeble shrink to hear,
Wandering amid the corses cold,—
The haggard Woman of the Wold!
Strange talk, methought, she held with those
Whose sense was fled, whose ear was froze!

XLVIII.

" In Hexham's walls a boastful crew
Were resting from their stubborn toils
Their languid vigour to renew,
To tend their wounds and count their spoils;
Loud rang the bells in Hexham's tow'rs,
Loud rose the shout from Hexham's throng,
And busy hands were scattering flow'rs,
And welcome flow'd from every tongue!
Fools! pliant slaves! their vile caress
Still crowns prosperity! They bless
The victor, not the man,—not merit, but success!

XLIX.

" For many a rugged year I've stood
At distance from such motley brood,
And now a curious glance I threw
Upon the noisy, busy crew;
The mute inquirer could not find
One man who seem'd of Bardolph's kind,
Mid shouting thousands he was still
Alone in semblance and in will!

Oh, what a heap of mummery,
What tinsel gauds! what foolery!
What toys for crowing infants meet
Did flattery lavish there the full-grown babes to greet!

L.

" But soon the wayward thing threw by
The harmless rattle, and began
For such stern pageantry to cry
As soothes and feeds destructive man!
For vengeance!—Let the scaffold rise!—
Oh, let not the auspicious skies
Wait longer for the sacrifice!—
The scaffold rose!—I saw it wet
With the brave blood of Somerset!
Calmly he laid him down to death,
And smil'd the glittering axe beneath!

LI.

" 'I go,' he said, 'life's conflict past,
I go to seek my sire in heaven!
Happy that even to the last,

Howe'er by stormy fortune driven,
Still steadfast in my father's track,
No adverse gale might turn me back!
In the same cause for which he bled
With joy my vital stream I shed!
Ye rebel crew, exult not yet,
All is not o'er with Somerset!
Till the last drop of Beaufort blood
Has York's rebellious hand imbrued,
It is not o'er!—and impious York
Has but commenc'd his rugged work!'

LII.

"Then, with an aspect firm and proud,
He turn'd him from the gathering crowd
Till holy friar his soul had shriven,
And yielded him the pass to heaven,—
Then 'twas concluded!—Father, say
Hast thou not wash'd the drops away
Which sprinkling o'er thy garments spread
When the aspiring soul from Beaufort's body fled?"

LIII.

" 'No,' groan'd the Friar, 'while Beaufort's tree
Yet stands, that stain unwash'd shall be!'
Then, drawing nigh the feeble light
From winking taper dimly shed,
He pointed to each shuddering sight
The ghastly drops of livid red
Which o'er his sleeve and bosom spread!
Prince Edward to his swelling breast
Eager the precious relique press'd,
In silence, for impetuous rush'd
Grief, gratitude, and wrath, and struggling utterance crush'd.

LIV.

Sir Gerald view'd the stranger-guest,
Bewilder'd where surmise might rest;
In vain his glances strove to trace
One line upon the Friar's face,
The shadowy cowl defied his eye
And mock'd his eager scrutiny;
From time to time, with jealous care,

Still deeper down his hood he drew,
Perchance the Father was aware
How many a piercing glance Sir Gerald tow'rds him threw!

END OF CANTO THE FIFTH.

NOTE TO CANTO THE FIFTH.

Then might the white rose chaplet wave.—Stanza XXIX. l. 13.

This passage alludes to a custom formerly prevalent in the northern and midland counties of England, and almost universally in Wales, (where, perhaps, it may yet be retained,) of hanging garlands of white paper roses in the churches when any of the village maidens or bachelors died. The author has met with a trace of the above custom in the church of the village of Middleton in Derbyshire.

" Now the low beams with paper garlands hung,
In memory of some village youth or maid,
Draw the soft tear from thrill'd remembrance sprung;
How oft my childhood mark'd that tribute paid!"

MISS SEWARD.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE SIXTH.

I.

Is it not sweet awhile to turn
From life's realities! to flee
From sober truth with visage stern
To sport with gentle fantasy!
To shun the irksome things that are,
And mock the cold rebuke of care!
Who would not, lur'd by Fancy's smile,
Cast down his burthen for awhile?
Who would not for awhile forget
To fear what future hours may bring,

To trace the past with vain regret,
Or groan, whilst present sorrows wring,
And twist, and strain, each bosom string?
Who would not listen to the song
Which lulls to fairy dreams our visionary throng?

II.

My Muse! I thank thee that thy cloud,
Hovering so oft o'er things that be,
Doth o'er them cast its rainbow shroud,
And hide the irksome train from me!
My Muse! I thank thee that thy hand
Of care so oft has loos'd the chain,
And led me to thine own bright land
Where care would seek his prey in vain!
Alas! I pray thee quit me not!
Wend with me till I touch the brink
Where every mortal lip shall drink,—
The gulph where all things are forgot!

III.

Rudolph resumed,—" My nature's pride
Rose as I mark'd the fickle tide;
I bless'd the silent star which shone
On the wild night when I was born,
Which bade me run my course alone,
And view earth's dust-form'd race with scorn!
But vengeance now in joy was drown'd,
The sparkling wassail-cup went round,
And steep'd in hypocras, the eye
Flash'd fire, the brain rock'd merrily,
For now the inebriate victors roar'd
Their songs of senseless mirth round many a festive board.

IV.

" To quit me of their shout awhile
I wandered where a scathed pile
Rear'd its grey brow, and seem'd like me
To hate the distant revelry:
'Twas silent! Once the holy din
Of song and pray'r was heard within,

But wrath and time had riven the wall,
And frail, and nodding to the fall,
'Twas nigh the hour which comes to all;
In narrow mounds on every side
Lay those who knew it in its pride,—
It was a solitary place,
Meet haunt for one like me, unown'd by kin or race!

V.

"But I was not alone the while;
For, as I mus'd, a murmuring sound
Came from within the mould'ring pile
And echoed o'er the hollow ground!
It might have been the wind that brake
Thro' the long vaults, and hoarsely spake,
Or else, perchance, mine ear had heard
The hooting of the lonely bird,—
I knew not—but with quicken'd breath
I pluck'd my dagger from its sheath,
And hastening thro' a yawning cleft
Which time and slow neglect had left,
Trod the dim aisles,—resolv'd to find

If aught had ta'en its lurking place
Within that solemn, sullen space,
Save wailing owl or raving wind!

VI.

"Nor from the fitful, eddying blast
Which thro' the narrow cloisters past,
Nor from the bird, whose nightly wail
Frights silence from those cloisters pale,
But from a heavy laden soul
Those murmurs, deep and dreary, stole!
Where once the holy altar stood,
And where its ruins still are strew'd,
Beside it, prone and prostrate, lay
What seem'd a Friar of orders grey;
Strange was that Friar's orison,
Mingled of pray'r, and threat, and groan!
He never heard my footsteps glide
E'en till they halted by his side,
And little dream'd what eye his strange devotion spied!

VII.

" Half-rising from the chequer'd stone
His floating drapery he unroll'd,
And from beneath its secret fold
A warrior's glittering weapon shone,—
Then flinging back his cowl's deep shade,
He kiss'd its cross, he kiss'd its blade,
And breath'd a curse!—From hatred's flame
Fed to the height by outrage dire,
Sure never curse more deadly came
Than blanch'd the quivering lip of that grey-stoled
Friar!

VIII.

" He call'd on those who all unseen
Peopled that dim mysterious scene,
On those whose soundless footsteps stray'd
Round many a once-emblazon'd stone
(Defac'd with damps, with weeds o'ergrown)
Where slow their mortal spoils decay'd;
On them he call'd the bond to keep
Of that fell curse so dire and deep,

And when he paus'd, as tho' to hear
What strange response should greet his ear
From that unseen, unearthly brood,—
Rudolph before his eyes a living witness stood!

IX.

" One instant did dismay prevail,—
The Friar's cheek turn'd icy pale,
One instant a convulsive start
Drove back the life-blood to his heart,—
One instant only, for 'twas awe,
Not fear that thro' his spirits ran,
And swift they rallied, when he saw
He only gaz'd on mortal man:
He snatch'd his falchion from its sheath,
'Well then! since thus it is,' he cries,
'At least we'll have a tilt with death!
Thou shalt not lightly win the prize!
Where do thy fellows lurking stand?
I fall not to a single hand!'
Not lightly might my efforts stay
His rash assault's impetuous sway,

For fiercer courage ne'er did warm
A soldier's heart, or nerve his arm,
Than now enkindled to the fray
The holy Friar of orders grey!

X.

" That live-long night, the Friar and I
Did thro' those mould'ring cloisters roam
E'en till the moon's half-veiled eye
Look'd on us thro' the riven dome:
'Twas that same Friar who bless'd the sprite
Of Beaufort ere it wing'd its flight,
'Twas that same Friar, whose garb retains
The drops which gush'd from Beaufort's veins!

XI.

" When morning came, I mix'd again
Amid the motley noisy train,
Who still with triumph's deaf'ning peal
Made Hexham's tow'rs and turrets reel;
But every tongue was hush'd and stay'd,
For now a warning trumpet bray'd

And silence and attention bade:
Then did a herald's loud acclaim
Brand many a high and noble name,
Then did he tempt the sordid sprite
Of many a base and earth-sprung wight,
And many a wretch, in fancy, sold
His soul to grasp the proffer'd gold!

XII.

"Thou, Lady, and the Royal Youth
Who some bright day shall rule our isle,
Were menac'd by the villain's mouth
In terms of outrage foul and vile!—
A felon's death the man shall die
Who yields thee succour in thy need;
But he whose treach'rous hand shall lead
Thy steps into captivity,
Or bring thee to disastrous end,
On him shall fortune's show'rs descend!

XIII.

" Next did the herald's voice proscribe
The Percy, and his gallant tribe
Of blooming brothers,—all who stood
Nigh Percy, or in love or blood;
Young Oxford, and the fierce cadet
Of the late fallen Somerset,
With more of lesser note, but most
Of whom their land might make its boast,
Were mark'd for ruin, at a price
Well fitted to inflame the thirst of avarice!"

XIV.

A slight convulsion seem'd to shake
Queen Margaret's frame as Rudolph spake;
Her pale lip quiver'd,—" Now," she cries,
" Now is existence dear indeed,
Since every breath we draw defies
The sentence which would bid us bleed!
Since every hour of life is worn
Triumphant in rebellion's scorn!"
" Oh, rather," cried the princely youth,

"Oh, rather hold thy being dear
In token fair of loyal truth,
Of British honour bright and clear,
Of stern, firm-rooted faith, invincible, sincere!"

XV.

Responsive to the gracious word,
Sir Gerald, kneeling, kiss'd his sword,—
"Hear, heaven! while life my veins shall warm,
Play thro' my heart and nerve mine arm,
Danger may threat, and treason lay
Her meshes in my master's way,
But till this throbbing pulse is still,
And till this burning heart is chill,
On danger's threat, and treachery's wile,
Secure shall Royal Edward smile!
Ere the proud citadel shall fall,
Ruin's resistless weight must crush th' embattled wall!"

XVI.

"For me," cried Rudolph, "'tis my trade
To cope with numbers undismay'd;

He merits not the victor's name
Who triumphs in an even game!
Till this tough trunk shall piece-meal spread
The earth beneath some rebel's tread,
In vain shall malice bend her bow
Against the royal stripling's brow!
Fain would I see some villain dare
Uplift his luckless hand to scathe one golden hair!"

XVII.

Mute, hidden beneath his muffling cowl,
The workings of the Friar's soul
No man beheld, but now some string
Was smitten e'en to answering.
Backward, with sudden act, he flung
The hood which o'er his features hung,
And cried, "Behold me, Edward! thou
Need'st not from me the deep-breath'd vow!
Thy foes, thy friends, thy hopes are mine!
My sword, my strength, my being, thine!
These still are left!—Thine are they all,
With thee to stand, with thee to fall!—

Till the last Somerset is down,
Yon vile usurper's brow shall find a thorny crown!"

XVIII.

"Lord Edmund!"—and the Queen with joy
Beheld the brave, impetuous boy;
For whoever look'd upon the face
Of him, the glory of his race,
Hop'd as they gaz'd. His spirit high
Still seem'd to challenge victory,
And he did bear aloft his brow
As tho' he thought his lightning eye
Could wither the rais'd arm ere it might strike the blow.

XIX.

"Well," cried the Queen, "ye are but few,
But iron-temper'd, stern, and true,
And full of manly hope,—I dare
Lean firmly on you! Few ye are,
But ye are sure;—and, mark me well,
Would yon crown'd traitor barter free
His crowd of veering vassalry,

The wavering slaves his ranks who swell,
And yield the base apostate crew
E'en for my gallant, trusted few,
My faithful warriors, brave and bold,—
I'd spurn his counters vile, and keep my fire-tried gold!"

XX.

"Alas! not *tried*," cried Somerset,
"We are but wordy boasters yet,
Breathing secure the unheard threat!
Would that some wizard's mystic pow'r
From mortal film mine orbs would free,
That I might trace the future hour,
And catch one glimpse of things to be!
Oh, Providence!—and yet, perchance,
Thy mercy to our eyes forbids the forward glance!"

XXI.

Rough Rudolph laugh'd,—"What recks it when,
Or where, or how the chances fall!
Or why impatient strain the ken
To see what shall be seen by all!

Be patient,—ruin or success
Is nigh. Thou hast not long to guess!
Yet, if thou needs must look within
Some doting wizard's book of sin,
Content thee,—I will point thy ken
To where (abhorr'd by common men)
Frowns the unhallow'd dreamer's den;
I'll pilot thee where thou may'st read
Of many a yet unborn, unperpetrated deed!"

XXII.

But Beaufort heard him not; his mind,
Active and restless, turn'd its heed
From dark conjecture, vague and blind,
To the bold plan and daring deed;
"Why, even now," he said, "the foe
Strikes o'er our unseen heads the blow!
We are surrounded! Bambro's tow'rs
Are sore beleaguer'd by his pow'rs!
Fair Alnwick is no longer ours;
And lovely Prudhoe, once our own,
Scowls on us with a rebel's frown!—

What say ye, gallants? Who will go
With me a Maying thro the foe?
Those who will go with me shall shake
Their morris bells at Bambro' wake,
And cheer and gladden with their play
The anxious eyes of warlike Grey;
Aye, by the rood! we'll forth anon,
And have our frolic yet, ere merry May be gone!"

XXIII.

"Young Beaufort," cried th' approving Queen,
"Bold is thy thought, not rash, I ween!
Who would sit cow'ring here, while round
The foe's insulting trumpets sound?
And should his bloodhounds track us here,
Nestling in secresy and fear,
Like timid sheep for slaughter penn'd,
Then Esperance, good night! the war is at an end!

XXIV.

"And yet we would not tempt our fate,
Let us be bold, not desperate;

Ere forth we wend, 'tis meet we know
Each point and station of the foe;
Experience tells us that surprize
May shock the brave and stun the wise;
Prepar'd, let the worst come, and try
The temper of our constancy!"
" 'Tis Pallas speaks!" young Beaufort cried,
" The soldier's counsellor and guide!
Come then, we'll scour the country thro',
And having track'd our route, strike tents for Bambro!"

XXV.

Prince Edward smil'd: " Thy deeds and name,
Thy prowess and thy wrongs, may claim
Alike, in conference or in fight,
To speak or strike, the *foremost* right!
Who shall dispute that right with thee,
Illustrious branch of noble tree?
No voice, save that of royalty!
Nay, my best soldier!—if we sate
Where now a rebel sits in state,
Thou should'st have scope; but, as we are,

We must be proud, we may not spare
One jot of that which will be ours
When fortune sends us sunshine hours!
It is the fallen Prince who brooks,
Like goads, the glance of equal looks,
But, oh, how priz'd the homage free!
Oh, how ennobled is the knee
Which bends before adversity!
Now, Beaufort,—to thy master bend!
Once thron'd, behold in us thy brother and thy friend!"

XXVI.

" My Prince!" cried Beaufort, and his knee
Swift press'd at Edward's feet the dust,
" May my arm shrink, and my sword rust
When my heart fails to render thee
Meet subject fear and fealty!
When thou sitt'st highest, when thine eye
Sees nought above thee save the sky,
Mid that fair-weather crew who stay
Till fortune's sunshine warms the day,
That crowding, climbing, cringing rout

Which then shall gird thy throne about,
Oh, may another heart as sound,
As humbly to thy service bound,
Amid those smiling ranks be found,
As that which now, 'twixt grief and shame,
Bears shrinking and oppress'd a much-lov'd master's blame!"

XXVII.

"Well know we, Beaufort, what thou art,
How strong thine arm, how true thine heart!
Well know we what thine House has done
To prop a tottering, falling throne!
Oh, had ye stood on fortune's side,
And on the prosperous party striven,
Those noble pledges, now in heaven,
This hour might shine in earthly pride!
I've lean'd on thee, and still shall lean,
My friend, thro' many a chequer'd scene,
For something tells me we shall steer,
Still link'd by fate, a joint career,

Together conqu'rors at the last,
Or both to ruin swept by one resistless blast!"

XXVIII.

The knights besought the Prince to rest,
Contented in the woodland nest,
While they at dawn of day were bound
To spy the foe-encumber'd ground;
" A few short hours to prudence yield,
Think on thy yet scarce healed wound,
And keep thy strength for glory's field!
At best 'tis but a vassal's part,
Ill suited to the regal heart,
In thickets and in glens to lie,
Creeping near earth, a silent spy,
With treach'rous, fox-like, wily eye!
The task is honourless, but need
Imperious bids us to the deed!"

XXIX.

The Prince replied, " I had blush'd to ask
Exemption from the irksome task,

Yet is my spirit idly bent,
And ye have won its glad consent!"
Queen Margaret frown'd: "What! hast thou slept
Till sloth's vile rust has o'er thee crept!
Coward thou art not!—but the vice
The next akin to cowardice,
Wearing its craven mien and gait,
The vice which next the valiant hate,
Is indolence!—A soldier thou,
And let such vapour dull thy brow!
Arouse thee, Edward!—I might brook
Upon thy lifeless form to look,
But to behold thine honours shorn,
To live to look on thee with scorn,
Would task even my strength—my blood
E'en at a thought so base boils like a lava flood!"

XXX.

Young Somerset and Erin's Knight
To earth their hasty glances bent,
Each standing mute like truant wight
By ruthless master roughly shent:

Not so the Prince,—thus calmly he
Repell'd the hateful obloquy,
" Content thee, Lady! thou shalt live,
Perchance, o'er this cold form to grieve,
But not to weep that taint of shame
Has left its mildew on my name!
Meanwhile, with all observance meet,
Our Mother and our Queen we greet!
Oh, Mother, thou shalt oft persuade
When we should startle at command,
And if thou still wilt be obey'd,
Beware, lest till it snap thou strain the filial band!

XXXI.

" Friends! fast tow'rds morning wears the night,
And when forth sets the golden sun,
Exulting, on his journey bright,
Be your appointed task begun!
So fare ye well! When eve again
With curtain grey obscures the plain,
About that hour, when failing day
Shall bid the busy crone prepare

To wake her taper's twinkling ray,
And mutter o'er her vesper pray'r,
We will expect ye,—now, good night!
Go snatch till morning dawns your slumbers brief and light!"

XXXII.

Then forth went either loyal knight,
Dismiss'd with many a kind "Good night!"
A thousand dew-drops gemm'd their bed,
And heaven's wide cope stretch'd o'er their head,
Their curtain, the white thorn of May
Shedding its blossoms as the spray
Trembled beneath the zephyr's sway;
And ne'er did golden censer fling
On velvet couch of slumb'ring king
Such perfume as that zephyr's wing!
If there be truth in gossip's tale,
The Fairy monarch loves the vale,
And oft, where now the knights are sleeping,
His tiny elves are featly tripping,
An emerald circlet on the sod

Marks where the little feet have trod,
Nought else, except that softer glows
The blush upon the summer rose,
And sweeter breathes the eglantine,
And brighter there the dew-drops shine,—
A greener, lovelier vale blooms not from Tweed to
Tyne!

XXXIII.

As Rudolph follow'd, Margaret stay'd
His hand which on the latch was laid,—
"Stay, trusty Rudolph,—we would try
Once more thy truth and secresy,—
Nay nearer!—To thy ear alone
We trust our bidding!—E'en our son
Knows not our purpose;" and the while
She ey'd the Prince with scornful smile,
"Tho' to our eye stands full confest
The boyish secret of his breast,
Howe'er his puny art would fain
Conceal it from our just disdain!"
Rudolph his dark and shaggy brow

Bent tow'rds the Queen, who whisper'd low;—
The words, methinks, must needs be strange
Which bade the outlaw's colour change,
Who stood 'twixt terror and surprize,
With stiffen'd form, and rolling eyes!
" How! dost thou mark me?" Margaret said,
" Or is thy faltering soul afraid?
Nay, if it be so, speak! We do not need thine aid!"

XXXIV.

Rudolph breath'd quick: " Lady, this arm
Ne'er falter'd yet at human harm,
Nor ever shrank this iron frame
From blow, which mortal might could aim!
Yet bears that woman's breast of thine
A heart whose courage mocks at mine,
For powers there be, of man unborn,
Who mortal daring laugh to scorn,
And these *thou* bravest!—Lady, well,
When tolls the village curfew-bell,
Expect me!—Now, to other heed,—

For he who *thinks* before his deed
Ever goes halting on, with weak, unprosperous speed!"

XXXV.

Another day ascends the sky,
The dew is fled, the sun is high,
The birds are singing merrily!
Yet all unheard the warbler's strain,
And the bright day but smiles in vain
To him, who, turning from the sky,
Perversely bends his wayward eye
Upon the troubled sphere within,
That narrow world of care and sin!
How few who inward turn their view,
Behold reflected there yon welkin's cloudless blue!

XXXVI.

Queen Margaret's heart with lab'ring thought
Intense seem'd, e'en to bursting, fraught;
The astonish'd Prince, awhile set free,
Escap'd her jealous scrutiny,
And many a sigh upheav'd his breast,

His eyes full many a love-glance threw,
And almost e'en his tongue confest
The passion, fervent, deep and true,
Which did his princely soul subdue;
Yet Margaret either mark'd him not,
Or every jealous fear forgot:
Sometimes with quick, impatient hand
She turn'd the slowly ebbing sand,
And sometimes watch'd the travelling sun
To see how far his course was run,
Save these, nor outward form, nor act,
That Lady's deep-fix'd thought one moment might
attract!

XXXVII.

The bleating flock that morning stray'd
Untended; their paternal guide
In dainty sabbath gear array'd,
At dawning bound him forth to ride;
Murm'ring at Dobbin's drowsy gait,
Behind her spouse old Maudlin sate.
And on they jogg'd, the si!

And thrifty crone for Swinborne town.
Who that beheld the sober pair
Might their ill-sorted errand guess,
Or deem that they so far would fare,
All negligent of daily care,
To seek the motley weeds of sport and idleness?

XXXVIII.

Yet so, in sooth, it is! They ride
In quest of folly's livery,
Vizors and bells, and aught beside
That sorts with rustic revelry;
Gloves, badge, and belt, and coat of green,
Bright cristofre, and arrows keen,
The sylvan garb of Robin Hood;
Maid Marian's kirtle, scarfe, and hood,
And folly's peaked cap set round
With jingling bells of tuneless sound,
And doublet strip'd and raied; and book,
And beads, and cowl of Friar Tuck;
Grim, horned masks of Mawmetry,

The glittering pole, the pride of May!
And ribbons floating fair of many a rainbow dye!

XXXIX.

Oh! world of care! Thy wild extremes!
Thy wakings dire from golden dreams!
Those motley robes are doomed to hide
The statesman's brow—the warrior's pride!
Lo! Wisdom, driv'n by sad mishap,
Conceals his brow in Folly's cap!
Pride! regal pride, must stoop to wear
The hedge-born swain's ignoble gear!
Those trappings which, till now in scorn
Of carking care were ever borne,
Those jingling, mirth-betokening toys,
The symbols erst of village joys,
The gaudy many-colour'd vest
So wont to wrap a thoughtless breast,
Now, to the form of lofty sadness
Must lend the mien of homely gladness!

Bless'd, with the garb, might greatness borrow
The artless soul of mirth, unvex'd by strife or
sorrow!

END OF CANTO THE SIXTH.

NOTES TO CANTO THE SIXTH.

Fair Alnwick is no longer ours,
And lovely Prudhoe, &c.—Stanza XXII. l. 9.

AGAINST these castles, as well as that of Dunstanburgh, were sent the Earl of Warwick, Marquis Montague, the Lords Falconbridge, Scroop, and divers others, and they were soon severally reduced, that of Bamborough holding out the longest, being stoutly defended by Sir Ralph Grey, and being, according to Grose, unrivalled, in point of natural strength, by any other situation in Northumberland.

The sylvan garb of Robin Hood.—Stanza XXXVIII. l. 7.

The following description of a forester by Chaucer may serve to convey an idea of the appearance of this important personage in the old English May-games :—

"And he was cladde in cote and hode of greene,
A shefe of pecocke arwes bright and kene
Under his belt he bore ful thriftily,
Wel coude he dresse his takel yewmanly.
His arwes drouped not with fetheres low,
And in his hand he bare a mighty bowe,
Of wood-craft could he wel all the usage,
A not-hed hadde with broune visage,
Upon his arme he had a gai bra

And by his side, a sword and a bokeler,
And on the other side a gai daggere
Harneised wel and sharpe as pointe of spere,
A Cristofre on his breast of silver shene,
An horn he bare, the baudric was of grene,
A forester was he sothely as I guesse," &c.

Maid Marian's kirtle, scarfe and hood.—Stanza XXXVIII. l. 8.

Her coif is purple, her surcoat blue, her cuffs white, the skirts of her robe yellow, the sleeves carnation colour, and her stomacher red with a yellow lace in cross bars. Friar Tuck was exhibited in the clerical tonsure, with a chaplet of white and red beads, his corded girdle and russet habit denoting him of the Franciscan Order; his stockings are red, and his red girdle ornamented with golden twist, and a golden tassel; at his girdle hangs a wallet, &c.

The Fool has a blue peaked hood and bells, &c.; the hood is guarded, or edged with yellow at its scalloped bottom: his doublet is red, striped across, or rayed, with a deeper red, and edged with yellow; his girdle yellow; his left-side hose yellow with a red shoe, and his right-side hose blue, soled with red leather.

From Mr. Tollett's account of the Morris Dancers in his window.—*Brand's Popular Antiquities*, Vol. I. page 206.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

I.

THE sun has reach'd the western heaven,
Nor dews arise, nor zephyrs fly,
A sullen, sultry, breathless even
On all that live hangs heavily!
Scarce did the sky lend breath to move
The lightest leaflet of the grove;
The little rill which lately stray'd
Sparkling, and murm'ring thro' the glade,
Now languish'd lazily along;
The thrush withheld his evening song,

And mute despondence seem'd to reign
Along the parch'd and gasping plain!

II.

Of those who in the cottage stay'd
Each seem'd to own the fervid hour;
Mute sate the Queen, and mute the maid,
As tho' each passive sense obey'd
The leaden sky's oppressive pow'r.

III.

"Now trust me," cried the Prince, "the gale
Which visits not this pent up vale
Flutters with cool and fragrant breath
Upon the wide, unshaded heath!
Oh, let us forth! I pant to taste
The freshness of the upland waste!
Besides, their hoary guide away,
Old Oswald's flock untended stray;
Come, let us hasten to the wold
And call the wanderers to their fold!
The shepherd's crook my hand shall grace,—

Come, let us forth! I fain would try
If yonder harmless, peaceful race
Will from my call rebellious fly,
Or to my summons yield their simple fealty!"

IV.

"My Liege!" replied the maid, "in vain
Thy voice would lure the timid train!
No, to their long-lov'd pastor true,
They startle at each accent new;
The factious still are prone to change,
But these with fond adherence cling,
Mistrusting voice, or accent strange,
To their long-follow'd pastoral king;
Thou lack'st the shepherd's humble skill,
Thou hast not learn'd the cadence shrill
With which, at eventide, the swain
From thymy pasture calls his people home again!".

V.

"Oh, come! and teach me then the strain
With which, at eventide, the swain

Wins his mute people home again!
They know thee, Geraldine, and oft
When the flow'rs close, and the dews glisten,
Have left their fragrant food to listen,
Enchanted, to thy warbling soft,
Then, from each knoll, or leafy hollow,
Have gather'd far and near, the spell divine to follow!

VI.

" Oh, let us go! my temples beat,
Press'd by the dense and smothering heat!
Come, Madam! let us lead you where,
Fann'd by a fresher, freer air,
Our spirits may revive,—these boughs
With twisted arms, which o'er us close,
Keep off the zephyr, and refuse
All access to the gale, which at the barrier sues!"

VII.

" Go, restless boy!" the Queen replies,
" Go, if thou wilt! In me, the skies,
Blow as they list, shall ever find

Superior to each shifting wind,
The courage of a regal mind!
I shrink not when the boist'rous north
Pours all his gather'd whirlwinds forth,
Nor droop I, when the dog-star's glare,
With sulph'rous heat, inflames the air!
Yet few there be, whose mortal mould
Melts not by heat nor shakes at cold:—
Content ye,—Be it as ye will,—
Do ye your feebler thoughts fulfil,
Here will I rest,—the time draws nigh
When our good Knights shall homeward hie,
I will await them,—ye the while
Upon the upland fell the sultry hour beguile!"

VIII.

For added word they waited not;
The Queen sate lonely in the cot,
And, as she eyed the closing door,
A dark smile gleam'd her features o'er;—
"Why, this is well!" the Lady said,
"Lo! e'en the skies vouchsafe their aid!

The skies!—No, rather from below
Exhales this thick, sulphureous glow!
But what of that!—to learned fools,
The drowsy drones of cells and schools,
Such questions leave!—In time of need
Whence helps arise I little heed,
If from earth's central caves they rise,
Or unintreated come, free tribute from the skies!

IX.

"Hark! 'tis a falling step! At last
Comes Rudolph!"—and a shivering thrill
Past o'er her like a northern blast,
Shaking awhile her firmer will!
It passes quick!—'tis gone!- And now
A sterner meaning bends her brow,
As Rudolph enters;—nought they spake,
But swift exchang'd a silent glance,
A look of dark significance,
Then from the cot their way they take
And up the narrow path, and thro' the tangled brake.

X.

Still silent on their way they hold
Across the desert, trackless wold;
The sun was down, but yet 'twas light;
A lurid, pale, and ghastly glare
Display'd to each mute wand'rer's sight
The wide heath desolate and bare;
The outlaw o'er the desert scene
Now, pausing, flung his glances keen,
Then stamping, with a felon blow
Rudely he struck his shaggy brow;
" Fool!" he exclaimed in sudden wrath,
" Have I so often cross'd the moor,
Now, like a dull and blundering boor
Perplexed to wander from my path!"

XI.

Just then the village curfew knell
Swept by with faint and lingering swell;—
He listened,—" Oh, in happy time,
To guide our footsteps o'er the fell
Yon steeple wakes its drowsy chime!

Two things its leaden tongue has told,—
East must we bend across the wold;
It warns us too that o'er the waste
We have but half our journey past,
For ne'er may night-hag build her cell
Within the sound of hallow'd bell,
And she we seek abideth where
No wind's officious breath can bear
Its echo on her loathed ear:—
Mark where yon pitchy current glides
Slow struggling with its weedy sides;
Trace we its dull and sluggish roll,
'Twill prove a trusty guide, and bring us to the goal!"

XII.

All nature sleeping seem'd, or dead;
The air was motionless,—unheard
Or insects' hum, or song of bird,—
And underneath or overhead
No living thing around them stirr'd!
E'en the strange bird, whose circling flight
Still heralds in approaching night,

His task forewent,—nor heavily
The drowsy dorr fled buzzing by:
Still on they trod,—the ghastly light
Which hither led them, past away,—
Thick rolling clouds obscur'd the night,
And to assist their baffled sight
Not one small star shot forth its ray.

XIII.

" Aye!" growl'd the robber, " now 'tis plain
The beldame flouts us! They who deal
With hell's dark progeny are fain
Their goblin mockery to feel!
Blood have I shed! and dyed my blade
In many a midnight ambuscade!
Man's pow'r I *know* I may abide,
But this dark race, unknown, untried,
I am not brave for them!—e'en now
Mine arm shrinks nerveless!—at my side
Fast knocks my heart!—a feeble foe
Might quell me with an infant's blow!
Mine arm has lost its strength, my soul has lost its pride!"

XIV.

Thick darkness cover'd them:—the hand,
By many a bloody outrage stain'd,
Faltering and weak, was lifted now,
With purpose strange, to Rudolph's brow;—
He rais'd it, by despair impell'd,
To trace upon his rugged front
That sign, which ne'er at holy font
On that unchristen'd brow was seal'd!
Yet ere his unaccustom'd tongue
Cried " Pardon!"—ere his rugged brow
Bore the blest token,—loud and long,
Above, around them, and below,
Burst a wild chorus!—Earth seem'd rent
Till its foundations rock'd with fiendish merriment!

XV.

At once upon the darkness burst
A blaze so dazzling that each eye,
Abash'd and baffled, clos'd at first,
Abiding not its brilliancy!
Their senses reel'd,—for every sound

Which the ear loves not, fill'd the air;
Each din that reason might confound
Echoed in ceaseless tumult there!
Swift whirling wheels,—the shriek intense
Of one who dies by violence;—
Yells, hoarse and deep, from blood-hound's throat;
The night-crow's evil boding note;
Such wild and chattering sounds as throng
Upon the moon-struck ideot's tongue;
The roar of bursting flames, the dash
Of waters wildly swelling round,
Which, unrestrain'd by dyke or mound,
Leap down at once with hideous crash,—
And sounds without a name,—so drear,
So full of wonder and of fear,
As seldom come to those who walk this middle sphere!

XVI.

This din unearthly so prevail'd
That e'en the Queen's high spirit fail'd;
With fainting heart, and freezing blood,
And trembling limbs, the Lady stood!

As yet nor she nor Rudolph rais'd
Their eye-lids lest some hideous sight
Might quell their tottering senses quite,
By that dire chorus sore amaz'd:
At once it ceas'd, for, over all
They heard a voice in thunder call
"Silence!" Once, twice, and thrice it cried,
Then all those deafening sounds sank on the ear and died!

XVII.

"If my word has force to bind
The riders of the midnight wind,
If from ocean's weltering wave,
If from the firm earth's midmost cave,
If from that region, cold and dim,
The wintry land of Fiacim,
Where all is still, and frozen sleep
Chains e'en the billows of the deep;
Whether amid the halo pale
Around the wat'ry moon ye sail,
Or ye be they who love to dwell

In some dank cemetery's cell,
And drink the yellow dews that fall
In slow drops from the stained wall,—
If each has felt that word of might
Which quells the disobedient sprite,
And grasps him in his swiftest flight;
If Balkin, and if Luridane,
Strong spirits, tremble in my chain,
And tread my circle,—now let all,
Mute and unseen, attend my call,
And all within, around, and over
The magic ringlet, closely hover!—
Lady! now unclose thine eyes!
Behold! behold our mysteries!"

XVIII.

One strong, internal effort made,
The Queen recall'd each scatter'd sense,
She rouz'd her pow'rs with force intense,
Shook off fear's aguish impotence,
And that appalling scene survey'd!
She knew, she *felt*, that round her stood,

Invisible, hell's evil brood,
Yet she had call'd herself again,
And, once set free from terror's chain,
Stood firm and shook not!—yet, behold,
How drooping, death-like, by her side,
Wan, terror-smitten, pow'rless, cold,
With every rigid nerve untied,
Stands feeble and aghast, the once ferocious guide!

XIX.

Still side by side they stood, beyond
That awful circle's charmed round;
The light which on their eyes at first
Too fiercely on the darkness burst,
Had ceas'd to dazzle, yet it threw
Around a wild and various hue,—
Now like the blue and vagrant ray
Which the night-wand'rer leads astray,
Now like the red glare, which, they say,
Glows quenchless in that murky den
Where howl the souls of wicked men:
Nine tapers, each in hideous frame,

Emit that wild and various flame;
For those nine wond'rous tapers stand
Each in a dead man's shrouded hand!
Three on the left, three on the right,
And in the circle's centre three,
Do lend their grim, portentous light
To that unhallow'd mystery,
And nigh the central three she stood
Whose spell enkindled them; her hood
O'erhung her face,—a funeral pall
Wrapt in its dismal folds her form so gaunt and tall!

XX.

Yet not on her, in fix'd surprize,
Dwelt Margaret's lately open'd eyes,
For, as she trac'd the circle's rim,
Her sight astonish'd fell on him,
On him, or one his form who bore,
Who deep within her bosom's core
In deadliest hate she did abhor!
Strange 'twas, that leftward of the Queen,
Unarm'd, two ghastly lights between,

Stood Richard! Nature's foulest work,
That dark, misshapen son of York!
His wide stretch'd orbs, and upright frame,
Alone the waking man proclaim,
For that fell woman's wond'rous skill
Had fix'd him motionless and still,
As tho' the fiery soul had flown,
And left its earthy mould deserted and alone!

XXI.

Now Margaret felt a mingling breath
Hot as the choaking sulphur-blast,
Chill as the night-gust on the heath,
And shudder'd as it pass'd,—
"They come, they come!" the sorceress cries,
And from her head the hood she tears,
While all the fury of her eyes,
All that might dazzle, scare, surprize,
On her unveiled face appears!

XXII.

" Children of the dust, arouze!
Long has hell heard your mutter'd vows!
Why droop ye—are ye not the care
Of the dark tribes that rule the air?
Where can our mighty master find,
Mid the dull ranks of human kind,
One, who, like Margaret, from her birth,
Unfaltering does his work on earth?
Margaret! Thou hast his favour won
By all the deeds that thou *hast* done!
Smile, son of York!—he loves thee too
For many a deed *thou art* to do!

XXIII.

" Children of the dust! I know,
Tho' each be other's mortal foe,
That one same purpose, aim, and end,
Hitherward your footsteps bend!
I know that each indignant soul
Time's slow disclosures doth abhor,
Your eyes the path would fain explore

Which yet remains to travel o'er
Between ye and the goal!
Ye come to break mild nature's laws,
And mock the great Eternal Cause!
For this ye come! Behold! Behold!
Behold the scroll of fate unroll'd!
Lo! where my skilful sprites the future hours unfold!"

XXIV.

Now bright, and brighter still, I ween,
The magic tapers blaze!
And with wond'ring heart the dauntless Queen
Beholds how quickly shifts the scene,
Beneath her deep-fix'd gaze!

XXV.

On either side, in double row,
Do massy pillars rise!
Majestic o'er the Lady's brow
The high roof arches! and below
A chequer'd pavement lies!

XXVI.

And hark! for the trumpet brays without,
And the organ peals within!
And louder yet from a festive rout
Echoes the wild triumphant shout,
A joy-proclaiming din!

XXVII.

Now open spreads the pond'rous door,
And lo! a princely band,
With golden censers toss'd before,
Come sweeping o'er the chequer'd floor,
Link'd kindly hand in hand!

XXVIII.

Now Margaret well her sight may strain,
And doubt if sooth it be,
Or some strange error of the brain
That first, amid that pompous train,
Her haughty self she see!

XXIX.

Oh! scarce might the indignant tide
Within her breast be stay'd,
When by that shadowy Lady's side,
Like gallant bridegroom leading bride,
Earl Warwick she survey'd!

XXX.

Next Edward comes, of Lancaster
The only hope and pride,
But his cheek was wan, and his look was drear,
And a tear-drop dimm'd his eye so clear,
And heavily he sigh'd!

XXXI.

Now wherefore, wherefore sigheth he?
Why wet with tears the hour?
Since, smiling by his side, ye see
Of all that noble company
The bright and peerless flow'r!

XXXII.

For by the lily hand he held
Proud Warwick's beauteous heir!
While joy, by fair decorum quell'd,
Within the Lady's bosom swell'd,
His, fostered black despair!

XXXIII.

Anon that fair and princely pair
Were link'd in golden chain!—
Then—all the pageant shrank in air,
Nor aught of all that glitter'd there
E'en now, doth now remain!

XXXIV.

The high-arch'd dome, the chequer'd floor,
The organ's peal, the choral song,
The gorgeous, grave, and stately throng,
With golden censers toss'd before,
The baffled eye-surveys no more!
Lost in amaze, by Margaret's side
Still Rudolph stood, the ruffian guide.

And still, two ghastly lights between,
Richard of York, with unmov'd mien!
And in the midst the wondrous one
Who rais'd that pile of seeming stone,
And call'd that glitt'ring troop which even now are gone!

XXXV.

"How may it be!" Queen Margaret cried,
"How may it be! Exist there pow'rs
Whose skill may soften hate like ours?
May Warwick's child be Edward's bride?
Shall son of mine call Warwick sire?
Forbid it pride! forbid it ire!"
But yet the smile upon her brow
Did those harsh murmurs disavow,
For quickly rush upon her view
Hope's dazzling visions, bright and new,
She cries, "Oh, wondrous woman, more!
Let me Fate's awful page explore!
Leaf after leaf would I unfold,
E'en to the final word!—till *all* the tale be told!"

XXXVI.

Scarce had she spoken, when behold
The gloomy night seem'd fled away!
Two mighty armies, fierce and bold,
Await the sign in firm array,
And armour glanc'd, and coursers neigh'd;
And the sun on many a bickering blade
And many a gaudy banner play'd!
On this side rear'd Lancastria's flow'r
Its bright and blushing head;
And high above th' opposing pow'r
Her paler leaf the rival spread!
And, hark! the signal!—Now begin,
Of those who lose and those who win,
The strife, the shout, the mortal din!
Behold!—they meet!—they clash!—they close!—
They mix!—Sworn friends and deadly foes,
In one dire mass, one struggling host,
All order and distinction lost,
Roll headlong, guideless, blind, like waves together toss'd!

XXXVII.

But mark the Queen!—the hue of death
Blanches her cheek!—her lab'ring breath,
Her hard-clasp'd hands, her blood-shot eye,
Speak nature's utmost agony!
The cold drops on her writhed brow
Her heart's convulsive struggles shew,
And—hark! that scream!—scarce can the ear
Its shrill and piercing echo bear!
"Hold, monsters! fiends in human mould!
Oh, stay your bloody hands! remorseless monsters, hold!"

XXXVIII.

"Come, cheer thee! cheer thee, mighty Dame!
These are but toys of airy frame;
Faint shadowings forth of things to be;
Mere mockings of futurity!
But see!—like morning mists they fly,—
See how they melt in vacancy!—
Oh, bid them quit thy mind as they elude thine eye!

XXXIX.

" Now, ere our royal guests go hence,
One pageant more our art must shew,—
Come, let us stir each mortal sense
Till rage or transport, joy or woe,
In either bosom overflow!
Night wanes apace!—prepare, prepare!
'Tis time—'tis time our task were done!
My sprites and I must journey far
Ere the grey dawning shall declare
The coming of the sun!
Prepare!

XL.

With crowned head, and ermin'd robe,
Grasping the sceptre and the globe,
While a vile rabble's uncheck'd tide
Roll'd after swells his regal pride,
Stalks slowly round the charmed ring,
What seems in act and state a king!
Amid the gems which deck his brow
Triumphant nods the Rose of Snow.

While, crush'd beneath the despot's tread,
The Red Rose droops her blushing head!
What lightnings flash from Margaret's eyes,
While "Long live Richard!" rends the skies!
For he it is, in shapeless frame,
Dark scowl, and halting step, the same,
Before him waves his well known crest,
That symbol of his soul, the grizzly arctic beast!

XLI.

Now Margaret wondering turn'd her glance
With keen inquiry fraught, on him
Who whilom on the circle's rim
Survey'd the scene in speechless trance;
There silent yet he stood,—but now
Triumphant smiles expand his brow,—
Smiles which to phrenzy wake the fire
In Margaret's tortur'd breast of vengeance and of ire!

XLII.

"And shall fate threaten ere it wound?
What unseen fetters web me round

That I must all the future know,
Yet tamely wait the coming blow
That smites me to the ground!
These *may* be toys, by sorc'ry wove,
The temper of my soul to prove!
Mere painted vapour! which the fiend
Can mould and colour to his will,
Till mortal sense, all gross and blind,
Surrenders to the false one's skill;
If it be so,—and who may spell
The cheats and forgeries of hell?
Shall we not try if human might
For once may baffle fiendish spite?
And tho' we fail,—'twill prove at least
How resolute a heart may fill a woman's breast!"

XLIII.

In haste from forth her zone she drew
A blade whose temper well she knew,
Her secret friend, her foeman's bane,
Ne'er had she sought its help in vain,
Once felt its point, no skill might save

Its hapless victim from the grave!
One look of keen intelligence
Her will convey'd to Rudolph's sense,
One quick and crafty motion gave
To Rudolph's grasp the poison'd glaive,
While in his ear she whisper'd low,
"Strike home, and falter not! the blow
Shall rid me of a deadly foe!"

XLIV.

The outlaw smil'd a grim reply,
And, follow'd by the Lady's eye,
Crept his unconscious victim nigh,—
He aims!—he strikes!—'tis done!—but, no—
For ere descends the mortal blow,
High overhead a deafening peal
Of thunder rolls!—th' uplifted steel,
Touch'd by a rapid fiery gleam,
Falls trickling from the hilt a glitt'ring liquid stream!

XLV.

Sudden the whirlwind bursts its chain,
In whelming floods descends the rain,
The red bolt fires the welkin round,
Or runs along the slippery ground!
Distracted and perplex'd, the Queen,
Each sense confoŭnded, deafen'd, blind,
Driven by the wildly warring wind,
Had lost the balance of her mind
In that bewildering scene!
Red flash'd the fire, cold pour'd the flood,
She knew not if she mov'd or stood,—
When, lo! a laugh of bitter scorn
Swept o'er her on the night-blast borne,
A laugh of insult! At the sound
The Queen arouz'd and gaz'd around,
And, if she dream'd not,—she espied,
(Scarce might she in the sight confide,)
Hard by, the good old shepherd's nest,
And now the well known latch beneath her hand she
press'd.

XLVI.

But, ah! a softer claim invites,
And gladly does the Muse return
From sorcery's wild and fearful rites,
Where hell-blasts breathe, and corpse-lights burn,
To trace the fairer paths where rove
Bright Hope, and Innocence, and Love!
No more the Prince and Geraldine
Reproach the dull and lifeless air
As up the mountain-path they fare,
Love waves his wings, and gales divine
Seem hovering round the conscious pair:

XLVII.

" Why," cried the Prince, " did adverse fate
Oppress my lot with toys of state!
Oh! I could curse the star that shone
Upon the inauspicious morn,
When to the cares of England's throne
A hapless heir was born!
While every rude and rustic youth
May taste the joys of love and truth,

My life, a struggle and a dream,
A sable cloud, or ghastly gleam,
Droops like a taper in the blast!
Oh! would the spark were out! Oh! may it quickly
waste!"

XLVIII.

Thus pour'd the Prince his mournful strain;
'Tis still love's licence to complain,
And cunning lovers wot full well
The pow'r of Pity's gentle spell!
Still, with unclosing lips, the maid
Her craggy path in silence held,
Whatever thought her bosom sway'd,
Yet rested mute, and unreveal'd;
She even check'd the rising sigh
Which waken'd at his word, and struggled to reply!

XLIX.

"Oh, lady! canst thou not afford
One pitying sigh, one soothing word?
Is cold and comfortless disdain

Sole answer to a Prince's pain?
Oh, hear me, lady! 'twas thy hand
Renew'd my quickly ebbing sand,
My glass was run, my task was o'er,
My pulse had stopp'd to throb no more,
But thou didst envy me the rest
Which crept so kindly o'er my breast,
And thou didst drag me back to prove
Tortures unknown till now, the pangs of hopeless love!"

L.

" Not I, but heaven detain'd thee here!
Not mine, but heaven's all-pow'rful hand
Renew'd, ere spent, the precious sand,
And sav'd a life to thousands dear,
The hope, the bulwark of the land!
The star which cheer'd thy natal morn
Beheld a man to glory born!
And shall some feeble, transient care
Usurp the soul of glory's heir?
Alas! if York could view thee now
With folded arms and drooping brow,

With triumph kindling in his breast
He'd snatch thy bright and sanguine crest,
And fling thee in exchange his pallid rose of snow!"

LI.

"What, dost thou hold me childish, tame,
That thou wouldst bribe me with a name?
Glory! What is't? All kinder joys
Forsake the breast by glory fill'd,
Its fierce and dazzling blaze destroys
All that is lovely, simple, mild!
Believe me, not the trumpet's sound,
The foe's defiance, nor the cry
Of those who throng their leader round,
And cheer him on to victory,
Would so arouze, my Geraldine,
As one indulgent word, one tender smile of thine!"

LII.

"Oh, my liege lord! no female art
Shall vex or blind thy princely heart!
Mine, freed from each disguising fold,

Let heaven's just eye, and thine, behold!
Alas! 'twere arrogance to hide
That Edward has not vainly sigh'd!
But why exult? My fervent pray'r,
My secret blessing, these alone
May follow thee where'er thou fare,
And trace thee, even to a throne,
For well thou know'st what barrier wide
Doth, fix'd by fate's decree, our separate paths divide!"

LIII.

Sudden as when from forth the cloud
That veils his splendour bursts the day,
Flings back the thin eclipsing shroud
And on the glad world pours his ray,
On Edward's lately clouded cheek
Did hope in all her radiance break!
He bent his royal knee, "Oh, Thou!"
He cried, "who, thron'd in clouds above,
Hast yet look'd down and bless'd my love,
Vouchsafe to ratify my vow!
If, save this maid, whom, next to thee,

My soul does worship, other bride
Shall ever share my destiny,
Then from my hopes thy favour hide!
Be gracious to my foe and fight thou on his side!"

LIV.

" What hast thou done!" the lady cries,
" What hast thou done! Nor will the skies
Seal the rash word, nor yet may'st thou
Fulfil that ruin-breathing vow!
That morn shall never rise, nor ray
On England's isle shall ever shine
To welcome in the nuptial day
Which binds thy splendid lot with mine!
Edward, mistake me not! Thy fame,
Thy virtue, thine illustrious name,
These are my hope, my pride, my care,
And, trust me, never will I share,
Even by thy side, the country's blame!
Oh, bid thy love resemble mine,
Oh, let it light thee to renown,
Oh, let it in thine actions shine,
Edge thy resistless sword and sparkle on thy crown!

LV.

" Nay, Edward, hear! This heart has felt
What none might bid it feel but thou,
And in that shrine where thou hast dwelt
No baser flame shall ever glow!
No! I will seek some hallow'd fane
And join the virgins' votive train,
And consecrate to love divine
That heart which now is fill'd with thine!"

LVI.

Upon the fair enthusiast's tongue
A mild and holy force did dwell,
Which o'er each word she utter'd flung
A strange, resistless spell;
And Edward gaz'd on her as tho',
Already past the fatal vow,
The sacred fillet bound her brow;
As if the world and he had lost,
For ever from their grasp, their loveliest, brightest boast!

LVII.

" Cold-hearted, cruel Geraldine!
Are these my hopes! was it for this
Thou bad'st thy smile a moment shine,
A moment on despair's abyss,
But to withdraw the treacherous light
And leave me plung'd in tenfold night!
What were a crown unshar'd by thee?
What! but conspicuous misery!—
No, let York take the worthless thing!
I *will not* be a wretched king!
I will not, Geraldine!—and thou,
Who calmly canst pronounce my doom,
Shalt sooner see this throbbing brow
Laid tranquil in an early tomb,
Than circled with that wreath of care,
That glittering mockery, which thou dost scorn to share!

LVIII.

" With thee, whate'er the utmost force
Of human arm and human will
May work to gild our mutual course,

My quenchless ardour shall fulfil!
Deeds which the desperate might behold
With eyes averse and bosom cold
Shall seem but pastime to mine arm,
Impell'd by thy resistless charm!—
Without thee,—short will be my story!
Then farewel, life, and farewel, glory!
York's enmity, and Warwick's ire,
At once, with Edward shall expire,
Yet, guiltless of my early fate,
Shall Warwick's rancour be, and York's rebellious hate!"

LIX.

Scarce had he spoken, when the storm,
Long hurtling in the murky cloud,
Burst over each unshelter'd form
With menace fierce and loud!
From every point the shrill winds blew,
In rattling show'rs the hail was driven,
Each instant on the dazzled view
Glanc'd a light flame of pallid blue,
The arrowy fire of heaven!

"How may I shield thee, Geraldine!"
O'erwhelm'd with anguish, Edward cries;
"How may I guard that form divine
From the fell fury of the skies!
Death borne on every blast around thy forehead flies!"

LX.

But Geraldine bethought her well
How from the down a pathway led
To where a hermit's lonely cell,
By holy meekness tenanted,
Would grant them shelter;—to her breast
Our Lady's blessed form she press'd,
And, whisp'ring low a pray'r for aid,
New courage arm'd the noble maid;
"Now follow me, my Prince!" she cried,
"Be heavenly confidence our guide!
Trust me, disarm'd of terror now
The fiery bolt assails my brow,
I do not fear,—then fear not thou!"
Her lover's manly arm sustain'd
Down the steep path her slender frame,

And soon the wish'd-for bourn they gain'd,
Safe from the pattering hail, and heaven's destructive flame!

LXI.

The tenant of this lone abode
Heard not, or reck'd not, when the feet
Of strangers stole on his retreat,
And nearer now and nearer trod;
He look'd not up, his downcast eyes
Seem'd anchor'd in the rocky floor,
Deep, heavy, life-consuming sighs
Each other chas'd;—an evil store
Of sorrow and unrest his troubled bosom bore!

LXII.

With hard, tenacious hand he press'd
Against that sorely burthen'd breast
The sign by every Christian borne,
The priceless wealth of those who mourn!
Grief's winter, not the chills of time,
Frosted the hermit's drooping brow,

And you might trace the auburn glow
E'en yet beneath the silvery rime;
It seem'd as in life's pilgrimage
He scarce had journey'd half the way,
Scarce past the noon-tide of his day,
But sorrow's heavy hand had done the task of age!

LXIII.

" Good Father!" cried the Prince, " behold,
All trembling, weary, wet and cold,
One whose slight texture droops beneath
The fury of the whirlwind's breath!
One little fitted to sustain
The fiery blast or whelming rain!
No wilful trespassers are we,
From yon unfriendly wold we flee;
Oh, then, I pray thee, hasten thou
The fuel heap, and bid her know,
Ere yet too late, its kindly glow!
That cheek, how frozen and how pale!
Good Father, haste, I pray, while yet it may avail!"

LXIV.

The hermit started, sigh'd, and took
In haste a faggot from the nook,
And Edward, kneeling, fann'd the blaze
That silent, sorrowing man did raise,
Then, lifting his exulting eyes,
"Come near, my Geraldine!" he cries,
"Oh! come, sweet maid! how bright! how warm!
Its friendly force shall quickly charm
The affrighted life-blood to its place,
Comfort thy shivering frame, and tint thy lovely face!"

LXV.

Yet all the while, the mournful host
To look on those he serv'd forbore,
His thoughts in bitter musings lost,
His glance still anchor'd on the floor,
And Edward only gaz'd on her,
The object of his hope and fear;
When that sad stranger shriek'd aloud—
"Mother of God! has earth no place,
No wilderness, where I may shroud

The burthen of my dire disgrace!
Who sent thee hither? Who reveal'd
Thy father's lurking place, the den
Where from the scoffs and taunts of men,
And thy upbraidings keen, I hop'd to lie conceal'd?"

LXVI.

" My King! my Father! Bless'd be heaven,
By whose resistless mandate driven,
Unsought I find thee! Do I see
My Sire alive, unskaith'd and free!
Why do thine eyes, averted, shun
The only relic of our race?
Why dost thou turn aside thy face,
Avoid his filial arms, and shrink from his embrace?"

LXVII.

" How, my wrong'd Edward, may I brook
On thy upbraiding smiles to look?
I, whose infirm and coward mind,
Gave thy fair fortunes to the wind!
Wert thou less good, and kind, and fair,

Less poignant were my heart's despair!
Has not thy mother taught thy tongue
What scornful greeting fits the author of thy wrong?"

LXVIII.

" Rouze thee, my Sire! We will not waste
Our breath in wailing o'er the past!
No! let us, sword in hand, explore
What secret time has yet in store!
Now when the storm shall cease to beat,
Forth from this dim, obscure retreat
We'll lead thee, father, where the Queen
And some who love the blushing rose
In secresy and hope repose,
With spirits yet unquench'd, bold, ardent, true and
keen."

LXIX.

" One hope yet lives, the single guest
That cheers thy father's dreary breast,
And by that hope, the hope of heaven,
I swear I will not hence be riven!

Nay, urge me not! My feebleness
Is strong and resolute in this!
The Queen! the Queen!—her very name
With ague shakes my inmost frame!
Ah! sooner would I drag again
The Rebel's ignominious chain
Than bear her hatred and disdain!
Forget a sire, my hapless boy,
Whose aspect serves but to destroy!
Nor thought, nor deed of mine avails,
Whate'er I touch withers and fails!
I will not hang a bane and curse,
My Edward, on thy gallant course!
I have not heart to fight, nor head
To marshal others to the fray,—
Thou little think'st what icy dread
Comes o'er me on the battle-day!
Oh! how I hate the field with human slaughter red!"

LXX.

"I yield, my father! May the hour
Soon visit this distracted land,

Which calls thee back to peaceful pow'r,
And fixes in thy gentle hand
The outrag'd sceptre! Even now
Thou hast not lost the pow'r to bless;
Oh, even yet, thou canst bestow
What millions covet,—happiness!
Give me but that, and doubt not thou
But we will soon uncrown the brow
Of yon Usurper! Geraldine!—
The King commands,—the Father's eye
Drops holy balm upon the tie
Which must our destinies entwine!
Ah! yet art thou averse! Speak! wilt thou not be mine?"

LXXI.

"What, dost thou beg a blessing, boy,
From him who has but liv'd to waste
The springing harvest of thy joy,
And scatter all thy hopes to waste?
And may *I* bless thee! Shall a word
These lips can utter make thee bless'd!

Oh! thou hast struck the sweetest chord
That ever trembled in my breast!

LXXII.

"Fearest thou, lady? Lift thy brow
And look on me! I am not stern;—
E'en yet my bosom has to learn
The fierce excess of anger's glow;
And thou, whom sure the forest brute
Would harmless pass, appeas'd and mute,
Why should I frown on thee? Come nigh!
Oh! how I yearn for once to know
The bliss of blessing! How mine eye
Aches for one glimpse of joy thro' this long night of woe!"

LXXIII.

They knelt in silence,—Henry laid
His innocent and holy hand
On each fair forehead, and he bade
The angels bless the sacred band,

While solemn, chaste, yet fervent vows
From either heart tow'rds heaven arose;
And now did Edward claim the bliss
Of sanction'd love's first yielded kiss.

LXIV.

The bride was paler than the flow'r
That sprang beneath the winter show'r,
And colder than the drop that fell
Upon that pallid blossom's bell;
She smil'd, and sadder smile, I wot,
Did never gleam on nuptial knot!
Alas! the bride's prophetic sight
Pierc'd far beyond the mystic rite!
E'en mid her vows her shudd'ring ear
Ill-boding whispers seem'd to hear
From blood-stain'd phantoms gliding near!
Far other are the thoughts which roll
With headlong tide thro' Edward's soul,
Of all his heart ador'd possest,
He snatch'd his treasure to his breast,
"And now," he cried, "thou art mine own!

Heaven knows I never lov'd but one,
And she, my sole belov'd, is mine, and mine alone!"

LXXV.

The parting moment came and past,
The hermit-king is left alone,
And o'er the dim and dusky waste,
With throbbing hearts, in trembling haste,
The youthful pair are gone;
And while across the moor they speed
We'll turn aside to other heed.

LXXVI.

Well laden with their motley gear,
Nor ribbon, bell, nor mask forgot,
The good old pair, with weary cheer,
At night-fall gain'd their lowly cot;
But Maudlin now perplex'd surveys
A silent, dark, deserted scene,
No smiling welcome met her gaze,
No voice return'd her kind "Good e'en!"
With trembling hand she struck the spark

To chase away the shadows dark,
And now her beads she told, and now
Swift cross'd her bosom and her brow,
Low mutt'ring ever and anon—
" Protect us from the evil one!"

LXXVII.

But, hark!—who comes?—for armed feet
In haste approach, and Maudlin's dread
Subsides as now the clanging tread
Halts close beside her lone retreat—
She guesses well, ere yet her sight
Greets Somerset and Erin's Knight;—
Alas! cold tidings did they bear!
" Where is the Queen?—Prince Edward, where?"
Cried Beaufort, wildly—" Do they sleep?—
Arouze them quickly!——God knows
What vigils it behoves us keep!
We must bestir us, or our foes
Will rock us, ere we wot, to long and last repose!"

LXXVIII.

" The Virgin shield them!" cried the crone,
" Where'er they be! Small time is fled
Since home I far'd, my errand done;
But all was silent as the dead,
For living mortal found I none,—
The lady and the youth were gone!"
Scarce had she said, when open flung
The door and in Prince Edward sprung,
With that fair conqueror whose might,
In unseen fetters, led her young and royal knight!

LXXIX.

" And art thou safe, Plantagenet!
Be thou our fortress then! for know
Bambro' has paid a subject's debt,
Her tow'rs are trampled by the foe,
And Grey,—the true, the gallant Grey,—
Survives its fall!—(alas! the day!)—
Survives to glut the rage of York
With slow revenge's bloody work!
Nay, worse,—for on his noble name,

His loyal, bright, illustrious fame,
Cold malice drops the ink of shame!
They hold him fast! and, if yon skies
Forbid it not, disgrac'd he dies!
Gods! what his noble breast must feel
When the vile menial from his heel
Hacks off the golden spur, while scorn
Holds up his scutcheon stain'd and torn,
Or with contempt's degrading word
Flings to the earth his broken sword!

LXXX.

" Edward! like deer at bay we stand,
Surrounded by the hunter band!
With conquest flush'd, keen Warwick's men
Scour every valley, hill, and glen
For many a mile! Thy banners fair,
Which flaunted late on many a tow'r,
No longer court the fickle air!
Oh, 'tis a wild and stormy hour!—
But while thou art, whate'er may chance,

Still, with a firm-fix'd, upward glance,
We'll glory in our cause, and follow Esperance!

LXXXI.

"Where is the Queen? We needs must hold
Brief counsel now—our destiny
Calls loudly for a prompt decree!
At once precipitate and bold,
Yet artful too, our course must be!
Where is the Queen?—methinks 'tis strange
At such an hour as this to range!
A sky of more uncertain mood
Did ne'er o'er wand'ring lady brood!
Heaven speed her hither!"—As he pray'd,
The Queen, by *other* pow'rs convey'd,
With Rudolph, op'd the cottage door,
And sudden stood their eyes before!

LXXXII.

There lack'd the time to wonder now
At aught that wonder might arouze,

The little group to council go
With beating hearts and knitted brows,
Then, soon resolv'd and soon prepar'd,
From Oswald's sheltering roof with cautious footstep far'd.

LXXXIII.

Yet ere they ventur'd forth, a change
Was wrought full marvellous and strange!
The Queen forsook, without a sigh,
Each outward relic of her pride,
Well pleas'd her dangerous dignity
In Maudlin's coarse attire to hide;
Again young Beaufort's glitt'ring steel
A friar's muffling weeds conceal,
The little shepherd-boy was there
With tawny cheek and raven hair;
And all besought the skilful aid
Which might discovery's ken evade:
The Prince and bold Sir Gerald took
Their gear from Maudlin's motley store,

And all who left old Oswald's nook
Some quaint disguising bore,
Save Rudolph, who, unchang'd, his own grim fashion
wore.

END OF CANTO THE SEVENTH.

NOTES TO CANTO THE SEVENTH.

The wintry land of Fiacim.—St. XVII. l. 6.

"We can mention one kingdom more admirable than the rest, viz. the kingdom of Fiacim, at the Northern Pole, where all the counsellors are magicians, and the names which they use in invocations are mathematically disposed in a wonderful harmony and efficacy to the performance of magical operations."—*Reginald Scot's Discourse of the Nature of Devils and Spirits,* book ii. p. 60.

If Balkin and if Luridane.—St. XVII. l. 18.

"Luridane is a familiar domestic spirit of the north, who is now become servant to Balkin, Lord and King of the Northern Mountains; he calls himself the Astral Genius of Pomona, an island among the Orcades, but he is not particularly resident there, for in the dayes of Solomon and David he was in Jerusalem or Salem, being then under the name of Belilah: after that he came over with Julius Cæsar, and remained some hundred of years in Cambria, instructing their prophetical poets in British rhymes, being then surnamed Urthin-Wadd Elgin: from thence he betook himself into this island, anno 1500, and continued there for fifty years, after which he resigned his dominion to Balkin, and hath continued ever since an attendant upon this prince.

"Balkin is able to inform the exorcist of all questions concerning thunder and lightning, the motions of the heavens, the comets and apparitions in the air, pestilence and famine, noxious and malevolent blasts, as also of the inhabitants of the north pole, and the wonders undiscovered throughout the world."—*Reginald Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft*, chap. ix, book 15.

Each in a dead man's shrouded hand.—St. XIX. l. 15.

The use of the hand of glory was to stupify those to whom it was presented and to render them motionless. The hand of a person hanged, or exposed on the highway, must be wrapt up in a piece of shroud, or winding-sheet, in which it must be squeezed to get out any small quantity of blood that may have remained in it, then put it into an earthen vessel with zimat, saltpetre, salt, and long-pepper, leaving it fifteen days in that vessel; then expose it to the noon-tide sun in the dog-days till it is thoroughly dry, or, if the sun is not sufficient, put it into an oven heated with fern and vervain, then compose a candle with the fat of a hanged man, virgin wax, and sisame of Lapland: the hand of glory is used as a candlestick to hold this candle when lighted, &c.—*Notes to Brand's Popular Antiquities*, vol. ii. p. 583.

Hacks off the golden spur, &c.—St. LXXIX. l. 16.

"For that Sir Ralph Grey had sworne to be true to King Henry he was condemned and had judgement given upon him by the Earle of Worcester, High-Constable of Englande, as followeth:

"'Sir Ralph Grey, for thy treason the King had ordained that thou should'st have had thy spurres taken off by the hard heeles, by the hand of the master-cooke, who is here ready to doe as was promised thee at the time that he tooke off thy spurres, and said to thee as is accustomed, That and thou be not true to thy soveraigne lord, hee shall smite off thy spurres with his knife, hard by the

heeles,' (and soe shewed him the master-cooke ready to doe his office, with his apron and his knife.) 'Moreover, Sir Ralph Grey, the King had ordained here, thou maiest see, the kings of armes and heralds, and thine own proper coat of armes which they should tear off thy body, and soe should'st thou as well be disgraded of thy worship, nobles and armes, as of thy order of knighthood. Alsoe there is another coat of thy armes reversed, the which thou should'st have worn on thy body going to thy death-wards, for that belongeth to thee after the law: notwithstanding the disgrading of knighthood and of thine armes and nobles, the King pardoneth that for thy noble grandfather, who suffered trouble for the King's most noble predecessors. Now, Sir Ralph Grey, this shall be thy penance—thou shalt goe on thy feete unto the towne's end, and there thou shalt be laid downe and drawne to a scaffolde made for thee, and thou shalt have thy head smitten off, thy body to be buried in the Frier's, thy head where the King's pleasure shall be.'

"This judgement was pronounced at Doncaster against the said Ralph Grey for rebelling and keeping of the Castle of Bamborough against King Edward."—*Stow's Annals*, p. 418.

Hall says "He was disgraded of the high order of knighthode at Dancaster by cuttynge off his gylt spurres, renting his coat of armes, and breakyng his sword over his hed: and finally there his bodie was shorted by the length of his hed, and had no more harme."

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE EIGHTH.

I.

Oh, England! years are fled since first
Wide o'er thy plains the war-cloud burst!
Long years are fled! yet following years
Still hear thy groans, still mark thy tears!
Yet where are they whose fatal shout
To havoc rouz'd the madd'ning rout?
Where they who toss'd the fatal brand
Of discord on their hapless land?
They are gone!—and follow in their place
Another and another race,

But peace, peace comes not!—they repose
Who kindled first their country's woes,
But, ere they slept, they left behind
A fatal present to mankind!

II.

What did he gain, the *mighty man
Whose pride the woeful work began,
To quench whose fierce and fiery thirst
These blood-streams on the nations burst?
What to appease his craving soul?—
The gall-drop from affliction's bowl!
A paper crown!—a shameful doom!
A death of pangs!—a timeless tomb!

III.

Where are the sickle and the scythe,
The meadow bright with golden grain,
The echoing laugh, the carol blythe,
Rude rapture of the rustic train,
Who follow home the teeming wain?
No harvests ripen now! no more

* Richard Duke of York.

The stoutly wielded flail beneath
Resounds the dusty threshing floor;
No longer does the ev'ning breath,
From pipe of homeward-faring swain,
Waft music o'er the twilight plain!
Alas, alas! such sounds would ill
The desolated land beseem!
Let fate the dreadful hour fulfil,
Then, wak'd from her distracted dream,
England may hear those sounds again,
May welcome back her pastoral train,
And count her nodding sheaves which ripen not in vain!

IV.

Long ages hence, Plantagenet!
When thy ambitious line has run
Its utmost course beneath the sun,
Thy race extinct, thy glory set;
When that proud name shall cease to be
The war-cry of a striving land;
When Time, who mocks the proud, on thee
And thine has laid his withering hand,

In those calm hours, the eyes which trace
The records of thy restless race,
Shall, weeping, bless the love divine
Which cut from earth the fatal line!
Nor deadly nightshade's dusky bell,
Nor aconite, nor hemlock fell,
Nor weed which springs on ground accurs'd
By wizard hands in darkness nurs'd,
E'er wrought such dolour, woe, and dread,
As thro' old England's frame the fatal broom-plant shed!

V.

St. Alban! on thy hallow'd fane
How ghastly gleam'd that morning's sun
Which first beheld of England's bane
The dismal work begun!
England!—the sword unsheathed there
Has mown thy ranks for many a year,
Nor ceaseth yet;—the human race
Shall fail methinks, and this good land
Become one vast unpeopled space,
Ere Wrath shall stay his bloody hand!

The mariner shall look no more
Impatient tow'rd the well-known shore,
But, oh! when, distant to his eyes,
Thy white cliffs 'mid the billows rise,
He'll woo the winds to waft him far
From the dire wreck of waste and war,
The ghastly dwelling of the dead,
The land of silence and of sleep,
The tomb which rears its lonely head
Amid the stormy deep!

VI.

York, for whose sake the whirlwind rose
That sweeps destroying thro' the land,
Hears not the tempest as it blows,
His heart is cold, unnerv'd his hand,
And blunt and edgeless lies his brand!
Reft of his spirit, hope, and pride,
He sank, heart-smitten ere he died;
He wept,—but 'twas a father's tear
That dimm'd the warrior's eye,
He wept,—and human fiends stood near

And mock'd his misery,
And bade him dry his sorrow's flood
E'en with a 'kerchief steep'd in his fair offspring's blood!

VII.

Old Salisbury! thy frosty head
Rebellion's cause did ill beseem!
But it is o'er,—the ruffian dream!
And in thy dark and bloody bed,
The peace thou hatedst hovers now,
Unbroken, o'er thy silver brow!

VIII.

Oh, Worster! it avail'd thee nought,
Thy brain, with hoarded science fraught,
Thy memory, bright with precious lore,
The plunder choice of Wisdom's store,
For thou didst close the warning page,
And, swelling with rebellious rage,
All the rich harvest of thy mind
To blind and wasteful wrath consign'd;
And, wise thyself, by folly led,

Met folly's fate, and laid thine head
Beneath the axe, whose stroke has driven
Full many a soul from earth, unripe, I ween, for heaven!

IX.

Bright Rose of Lancaster! thy brow
May lose its bloom, thy stem may droop
In sorrow o'er the gallant troop
For ever in thy cause laid low!
The blood of Beaufort's princely line,
How has it stream'd for love of thee!
Oh, for that fatal right of thine,
Two branches from its spreading tree,
Majestic as the forest oak,
Have fall'n beneath the woodman's stroke!

X.

Two hardy Cliffords, sire and son,
Their fierce, relentless course have run,
Yet, ere they gave the havoc o'er,
Their souls were clogg'd with hostile gore!
Old Oxford claims the M

And his brave first-born, young De Vere;—
On the same block their heads repos'd,
One shroud their bleeding forms o'erspread,
One hour their task of sorrow clos'd,
And thus, in union kind, their souls tow'rds heaven fled!

XI.

Percy!—two lions of thy breed
Have ceas'd to waste the hostile fold,
Yet strives the third, with gallant deed,
To win the death-bed of the bold!
When were the Percies of the north
Found ling'ring when the war-horn blew?
When were they slow to gallop forth
When shouts proclaim'd the game in view?
From England's dawn the Percies were,—
They sparkle in their country's story,
With her they run their proud career,
And but with her's shall set their glory!

XII.

York! on the warm and sunny side
Of fortune does thy quarrel lie,
Thou hast woo'd, and won her for thy bride,
And dost command thy destiny!
Bold art thou,—for thy sword and will
Are all the laws thou dost fulfil,
And wily,—for thine eye and tongue
Are sweet accomplices in guile,
That even they who feel thy wrong,
Young robber, murmur not the while,
Fed by thy honied words, and dazzled by thy smile.

XIII.

A lip where smiles are never wanting,
A tongue, for flatt'ry or for vaunting,
A breast, whose fiery spirit cries
" Hark forward! forward to the prize!"
A cheek where beauty's pride is flaunting!
A hand for scatt'ring, and an eye
Defiance on the foe to dart,
Or, aided by a treach'rous sigh

To steal into a lady's heart,
And win the citadel, or ere
The warder dreams of danger near!
Thus, was th' aspiring son of York
Accomplish'd for his daring work!
But, trace ye all whose sanguine thought
Have glory's meed thro' havoc sought,
From him who now for England strove,
To the mad son of Libyan Jove,—
Whate'er the climate, race, or name,
All stamp'd and character'd the same,
Are those blind, headlong souls who only live for fame!

XIV.

Is there a river in the land
Can boast a clear and guiltless wave,
Pure from the life-blood of the brave,
Where no man wash'd his gory hand?
I fear me, no! Is there a plain,
By shepherd's lonely footstep trod,
Where some huge heap of native slain
Swells not the turfy sod?

Is there a valley so remote,
To silence and repose so dear,
That never war-cry's thrilling note,
Nor heavy clang of mailed coat,
Was heard to echo there?
Still to that virgin spot be given
The mildest smile of fav'ring heaven,
There, gently let the year descend,
Its bowers may never tempest rend,
Short be its winter,—be its spring
Still fann'd by young Favonius' wing,
And no lament come there, save ring-dove's wail at even!

XV.

Oh, Rose! who long hast bloom'd the pride
Of England's garden, hang thy head!
The dew upon thy leaves is dried!
The generous, bright, exulting red,
The triumph of thy cheek, is fled!
And one less beautiful shall raise
Her stem where now thy bloom decays!
York's Rose is now the gar'

York's star to fortune lights the way!
Nay, heaven is pledg'd! York's eyes have seen,
Responsive to their glances keen,
Three golden, glorious suns at once illume his day!

XVI.

When Hexham's glad result he knew,
Securely smil'd the victor boy,
His scatter'd foes, forlorn and few,
Molested not his dream of joy,
Or if they cross'd his thoughts awhile,
The brighter play'd his dimpled smile!
That languishing, complaining boy,
Allur'd by every gaudy toy,
That humble boy who breathes so sweet,
And sighs so soft, at lady's feet,—
His heart is iron! Mercy ne'er,
Nor kind remorse, found entrance there!
That fond, caressing tongue can doom
Warm thousands to the joyless tomb,
And that bright eye can sparkling see
Fulfilled the cruel tongue's decree!

Oft has he felt his bosom swell
With hatred's dire and deadly bliss,
Oft has he known those transports fell,
Those joys, to demons dear, which crown the merciless!

XVII.

Fly, friends of Lancaster!—the cry
Of York's hot blood-hounds follows nigh!
Fly, ye forlorn, defeated crew,
Your own land is no place for you!
Oh, hide not here!—the unseen snare
E'en now is weaving round your hold,—
Lo! he you trust in counts his share
Of dazzling, life-betraying gold!
Ah, trust not oaths!—that oaths are wind
Full many a victim finds too late—
Fly then, nor cast a glance behind,
And listen not to man, but fate!—
Flee fast, poor aliens! flee afar,
Sad remnants of unnatural war!
Flee, hunted, persecuted few!
Your own land is no plac

XVIII.

Oh, chance and change! 'tis Fortune's jest
To watch the mighty while they smile,
And pow'r and pride lift high the breast,
Then, break the prop on which they rest,
And hurl them to the vile!
And as they fall, to mock them more,
Down to the dust she bends her gaze,
And thence some minion foul doth raise
To wear the robes they wore;
Then loud laughs Fortune to behold
Prostrate the high-born and the bold,
While, seated in their tott'ring place,
The new-sprung creatures of her grace
Laugh too, and as they laugh forget their cradle base!

XIX.

Oh, Exeter! what human breast
But heaves to think upon the woe
That ere thy spirit found its rest
It struggled with below!
Fortune and hope were perjur'd then

When in thy smiling mother's ear
They swore that thou, mid mighty men,
Shouldst run a high career!
Born mid the noblest, thou should'st keep
The promise fair thy birth had given,
And when life's golden thread was riven,
With kindred princes lay thee down,
And mingle dust, with dust illustrious as thine own!

XX.

Blind! blind to all the future brings,
What from the present may we guess!
The prosp'rous hour has twofold wings,
And what *was* full *is* emptiness!
Oh, Exeter! so poor of soul,
That wand'ring in a foreign land,
Thou begg'st with tears the scanty dole,
And tak'st it from a stranger's hand!
Oh! baffled, ruin'd, exil'd wight,
To beggary and despair consign'd,
Bewilder'd in affliction's night,
With broken heart, and cov[illegible]

She who thy short-liv'd splendours shar'd
Turns from the wretch, and wisely blends
Her smiles with Fortune's;—all discard
The Briton who unseemly bends!

XXI.

Helpless, forgot, without a friend,—
Where shall thy piteous story end?
When thou hast suck'd the dregs of sorrow
Thro' many a long and tedious morrow,
The surge that bathes thy native land
Shall fling thy cold corse on her strand,
For Providence directs the wave
To roll thee tow'rds a native grave!
The land that threw thee from her breast,
An outcast and a wanderer,
Shall lend a little earth to rest
All that remains of thee, once mighty Exeter!

XXII.

Still, o'er the young Usurper's throne
The sky a golden light has pour'd,

Success has mark'd him for her own,
And bless'd his sceptre and his sword!
Lux'ry and Vengeance share his hours—
"What shall we fear?—the realm is ours!
Ours is the realm! Our foot below
Ignobly lies our foe-man's brow!
Now, minstrels sing! now beauty smile,
The regal warrior to beguile!
Around his thoughts twine Pleasure's wreath,
And fan them with the west wind's breath,
Bid him forget what toils have worn
His hours of prime, his dewy morn!
Bid him forget the irksome strife
That vex'd the sun-rise of his life!
Let no presumptuous care intrude
Upon his glory's plenitude,
But let his cup with bliss run o'er,
Ere youth's quick pulses beat no more!

XXIII.

But hark! methinks the soft west wind
Is yielding to a shrewder breath,

That blows ungenial and unkind
O'er Pleasure's with'ring wreath!
Too sure it comes,—the heavy cloud
Bursts o'er the thoughtless monarch's head!
Now, where are Lux'ry's flimsy crowd?—
Dismay'd, dispers'd and fled!
Their fragile texture may not bear
The searching, keen, and wintry air!
They are for summer, when the boughs
Are bending with the ruddy spoil,
When every hedge-row yields its rose,
And tawny harvests wave o'er all the generous soil!

XXIV.

Now where's the brain, and where's the hand,
And where's the heart which, once thine own,
Taught thee against the world to stand,
And lifted thee to England's throne?
Warwick, where art thou? Gird thy sword,
And spur amain thy courser fleet,
For he, thy self-elected lord,
Shakes in his lofty seat!

XXV.

Ingratitude in Warwick's breast
Has fix'd its deadly viper fang,
And raging, madd'ning with the pang,
He turns his victor crest!
While gentler spirits droop and die,
Chill'd by neglect's inclemency,
A thousand thoughts of service true
By broken faith repaid,
Bursting at once to memory's view,
The impetuous soul invade!
Remorseless wrath the bosom rends,
And love, to hate its fuel lends!

XXVI.

Edward! the man who toil'd and bled
To make thee what thou art,
Withdraws the counsels of his head,
The homage of his heart!
Edward, beware! Of alien love,
More fell than inborn, native hate,
The quenchless rage prepare to prove,

Warwick has flung his steeled glove!
He braves thee to the field! Hold firm thy tott'ring state!

XXVII.

Nor yet, alone to Lancaster,
The milk-white bear is gone!
Will Clarence too the banner rear
Against his father's son?
Yet faints not Edward: "Let them go!
Yea! let the shallow Clarence fly!
For Warwick, rather would we know
His aspect as an open foe,
Than brook his friendship's tyranny!"
Yet, there's another knot untied,
A kinder, closer tie,
Lo! Montague forsakes thy side,
And seeks thine enemy!
Thou tremblest now, light-hearted king!
That stroke has reach'd thee! Montague
Does pay thee back the festering sting
From injured Warwick due!

XXVIII.

When Fortune shifts, the human race,
Like ebbing waves, recede;—
Lo! they who throve in Edward's grace,
Roll refluent from his need!
Lord Hastings! tho' thy polish'd brow,
And courtly bearing, might beseem
Such fragile, flaunting things as grow
Beneath the summer beam,
Despite that soothing, silken tongue,
Despite that form so fair,
Thou hast a spirit bold and strong
To front the frosty air!
Thou dar'st beside thy friend to stay
While treacherous thousands fall away!
The blast from which those recreants flee
Appall'd and shudd'ring,—braces thee!

XXIX.

Sad exile in a foreign land,
With form supine and drooping crest,
Did many a pale Lancastrian stand,

For hope was faint in every breast!
E'en Margaret, if some projects wild
Her restless bosom still did share,
O'er which her fancy sternly smil'd,
They were the offspring of Despair!
Such shapeless, threat'ning crowds, as rise
From Hope's cold ashes when she dies
To soothe the desolated soul
With strange suggestions, fierce and foul,—
Visions of vengeance! meet to sate
The cravings of the desperate!

XXX.

To Gallia's court, where Margaret sate
Dark brooding o'er her alter'd state,
What tidings may yon herald bear
To rouze the thoughts of Lancaster?
The badge upon that herald's breast
Is Warwick's well-known hated crest!
"Rebellious Nevil! deemest thou
Thy Queen so poor of soul,
That she will deign one glance to throw

On sentence which from thee does flow?
Take back the hated scroll!
And hence!—or Margaret's awful wrath,
Vile worm, shall crush thee in its path!"

XXXI.

" Not so," the pensive Edward cries,
" Passion *may* dictate to the tongue
Whose warm and uncheck'd energies
Upbraid a private wrong!
As man to man, my heart would fain
Give utterance to its just disdain,
But he whose birth-right is a throne
Must quell each impulse of his own!
Say, herald! what does Warwick send
To greet the outrag'd Lancaster?
Tires he of treason? Does he bend?
Or dost thou to our presence bear
New insults, such as cowards dare
Lance on an unarm'd foe,
Who, all unfurnish'd for the war,
Safely he strikes, nor fears return'd the dastard blow!"

XXXII.

" My Liege, no warrant do I bring
To guess the counsels of my lord!
Yet do I think the new-made king
Hath rudely cut the well-knit string
Which held them in accord!
A cloud on Warwick's brow is spread,
And I do think my master feeds
Upon such sour and leaven'd bread
As stern Repentance kneads:
Please you, this scroll shall well express
What I may but at distance guess!"

XXXIII.

" Ah, is it so!" Queen Margaret cries,
While new-born triumph lights her eyes,
" Warwick! I revel in thy smart,
Thou hast a viper in thy heart!
But, soft ye! Deigns that mighty lord,
The arbiter of England's fate,
Deigns *he*, with meek and honied word,
To soothe the ear of hate!

Oh, hour of bliss! oh, moment sweet!
Proud Warwick's soul is at our feet!"

XXXIV.

See Edward's keen and rapid eye
The eventful page explore,
See from his cheek the colour fly,
While many a hard, convulsive sigh
Betrays his conflict sore!
He gnaws his lip and twists his brows,
And to his foot the tablet throws,
And passion laughs to feel his soul
Trembling once more in her controul!

XXXV.

" Never, by heaven! Perish first
Each hope that on my cradle shone,
False hopes, by servile flatt'ry nurs'd
To feed a monarch's son!
Uncrush'd, unbroken by my fall,
Fond phantoms! I renounce ye all!
Ambition's air-built fabrics perish!

While still tenacious in my breast
One sweetly smiling form I'll cherish,
And, recking little of the rest,
Forego such tinsel toys, contented to be bless'd!"

XXXVI.

The Queen with wond'ring gaze beheld
That gentle breast to tumult swell'd;
The trampled scroll in haste she seeks
To find from whence the tempest breaks;
She smiles exulting! "Welcome home,
Ye long-fled hopes! Each glorious thought,
With empire and with vengeance fraught,
Return ye to your home! to Margaret's bosom come!"

XXXVII.

She stands entranc'd,—her heart dilates,
As fancy to her view creates
Such lofty forms, as pleas'd her eye
In her noon-dream of prosperity;
Her hand again the sceptre grasps,
The regal wreath her temples clasps;

Lo! how her dark eye rolls disdain
On crowds of kneeling slaves again!
So skilfully doth fancy frame,
That all seems real,—and 'twere well,
If grim conviction never came
Her tidings cold to tell;
Thrice happy dupes! if cheated on
The show might last till time is done!

XXXVIII.

Still rapt in hope's delicious trance,
Aloft she threw each kindling glance,
Nor deign'd her ear one sigh receive
Which did from Edward's bosom heave,
Nor deign'd her dazzled eye behold
His drooping aspect, wan and cold!
He, heir of England! was the hand,
The engine, mov'd by her command,
By fate created to fulfil
The mighty workings of her will!
Nor less than madness 'twere to deem

A beardless boy's love-woven dream
Its puny forms might raise, to thwart ambition's scheme!

XXXIX.

Still did the valiant high-soul'd few,
Who ever thro' success and sorrow
Had kept that deep-sworn vow in view
Which held them to one sovereign true,
Tho' long from hope they ceas'd to borrow
The presage of a brighter morrow,
Becoming well their title high,
The courtiers of adversity,
Still punctual hold their grave resort
To bow the knee in Margaret's court:
Of these, to seek the Royal Dame,
With Somerset and bold De Vere,
Sir Gerald and the Percy came,
Led by a sound which busy fame
Had blown abroad in every ear,
Of news from England,—and the Queen
Well understood the anxious mien,
Half-spoken word, and glance full fraught with question
keen.

XL.

"Now welcome, nobles! welcome all!
Ye who have shar'd our sorrows long,
And, fellow-mourners, borne the pall,
And sung the doleful requiem song
O'er fallen grandeur! 'Tis decreed
Ye cast away the funeral weed!
Wash from your cheek the staining tear,—
Our fortune changes! Ye shall wear
Such vesture as beseems the guest
Bid to a royal bridal feast!
Why do ye stand in wild amaze
With such unfixt and doubting gaze?
I am no prophetess, to rave
Of what the lagging future brings!
Nought certain brings it but a grave!
But I do speak of *real* things,
Substantial, palpable!—Read, read!
Yon tablet shall confirm your yet unsettled creed!"

XLI.

Th' impetuous Beaufort quickly pour'd
On every greedy ear
Each gladd'ning, hope-enkindling word
That welcome scroll did bear!
His fervent spirit never prov'd
The sober check of reason's rein,
To death he hated or he lov'd,
His joy was rapture, and his pain
Was writhing agony! He press'd
The tablet to his bounding breast,
And, even in his sov'reign's sight,
Indulg'd the madness of delight!
All, save the Prince, rejoiced, and he,
Stung by the boist'rous extasy,
Frowning, had left the irksome scene,
But halted in his path, arrested by the Queen!

XLII.

" Stay, Prince! delay may dull the gloss
Of our new hopes! Let us prepare,
Ere envious chance the compact cross,

Our prompt approvals, kind and fair!
Herald, retire! we pray thee wait
The issue of a brief debate;
We do but counsel on the words
Which best may speak our fair accords:
Ourself will yield such meet reply
As suits Earl Warwick's courtesy,
The while our princely son shall frame
His own heart's message to the dame,
Who well may royal homage claim:
Retire, good herald, while our care
Doth for thy home return prepare
A lightsome load of lover's sighs,
Of cancell'd griefs and wrongs, and new-knit amities!"

XLIII.

Now ev'ry eye was anchor'd keen
In Edward's strange and grief-struck mien,
While each benign and smiling grace,
Like light'ning, fled from Margaret's face,
And every soft, persuasive tone
That warbled on her lip was gone!

"Now mark me, Prince! and mark me well,
Thou art colleagued with England's foes!
Thy base, degenerate thoughts rebel
Against thine own illustrious Rose!
A child, a wayward boy art thou,
And we will treat thee as thou art,
Till thou canst act man's firmer part,
And off this baby mood shalt throw!
Meanwhile,—no time have we to chide,
Nor yet to woo thee to decide,—
The sentence is gone forth! Fair Nevil is thy bride!"

XLIV.

"My Liege," said Oxford, "we have stood
Between thee and destruction's flood,
And from the same embitter'd chalice
Have drank with thee of Fortune's malice!
That self same cup our fathers quaff'd
Till death was mingled in the draught,
Nor from the mortal beverage shrank,
And, e'en to death, would we have drank!
Nor was our duty less,—the cost

Were cancell'd by one vaunting boast!
But hear a Briton, royal youth,
Nor let thy soul abhor the truth,—
If, in the councils of thy heart,
Thou hid'st a rebel! If, when fate
Calls thee to act a noble part,
Then thou dost shrink and hesitate,
False to thyself!—where is *our* trust?
Lost! broken! trampled in the dust!
A mock for traitors! No! my soul,
Recoiling, spurns a thought so foul!
By heaven we do thee wrong! And yet
Thou art that true Plantagenet,
To whom our vows are pledg'd, on whom our hearts are set!"

XLV.

"Oxford! thy words do press me sore!
And I do tell thee, valiant lord,
'Twere light to feel thy pointed sword
Within my bosom's core!
Yes! Ye *did* nobly, firmly strive,

True to my cause, while hope did live,
And, faithful, even when she died,
Ye did not quit your master's side!
Illustrious boast! Ah! cancel not
A debt so glorious! do not blot
So fair a record! Hard it were
To rate your services too high,
Yet were they mightier still, I swear
They shall not teach my soul to wear,
E'en tho' ye forge the chain, the badge of slavery!

XLVI.

"But one word more! Earl Warwick's heir
Can ne'er be Edward's bride,
Nor e'er shall blood of Nevil share
Our good, or evil tide!
Heaven has receiv'd my plighted vows,
And, mother, thine anointed spouse
The solemn rite did bless,
While from his meek and holy eye
Did fall, that rite to sanctify,
The dew of gentleness."

XLVII.

" Lords," said the queen, " ye do but waste
In idle colloquy the day,
And manly reason were disgrac'd,
If it should cast one hour away
On such a trifler, who seems born
To bring a glorious cause to scorn!
I pray ye heed him not!—The boy
Shall quickly yield his vulgar toy!
Meanwhile, the task is ours, to soothe
Our ancient foe with greeting smooth,
And tho' our son be somewhat slack
Of knightly courtesy,
It irks not us; what he doth lack
Ourself shall well supply!
Would heaven we had a worthier son
To match with Warwick's heir, and fill Britannia's
throne!"

XLVIII.

"Illustrious Peers," Northumbria cries,
"Ours is the fate of darkling men,
Who chase the bog-fire as it flies
O'er brake, and moor, and fen;
Thro' deep and dangerous ways we came,
Pursuing still the flickering flame,
And, as the bright illusion past
O'er the unsound and gulphy waste,
Rash travellers,—we follow'd fast,
And still were following,—when, no more
The futile phantom flits before,
But leaves us, where such phantoms leave
The fools who to their guidance cleave,
In darkness!—and each wiser knave
Who kept the beaten path, laughs as he hears us rave!"

XLIX.

"Plantagenet! one more appeal!"
Cried Oxford: "'Tis no moment now
In flattery's garb to clothe our zeal!

Tho' thou mayst stagger at the blow,
I'll aim it where thou best canst feel!
Look at yon king of revels! he,
Who yesterday, caress'd, ador'd,
Thy fickle England's worshipp'd lord,
Mock'd from his distant throne at thee!
That flatter'd, pamper'd, prosp'rous thing,
That blooming, glitt'ring, summer king!
The multitude, but yesterday,
Did glow and tremble at his nod,
And on his crowded altars lay
Meet incense for a God!
And, save our little faithful band,
All that is noblest in the land
Fenc'd him around with heart and arm,
(Strong arms, and hearts with courage warm,)
To guard the throne they rear'd from insult and from
harm.

L.

" Lo! while we breathe, the show is past!
The frost-work melts! and we may cast

Our eyes bewilder'd on the place
That gorgeous pageantry did grace,
And marvel at the empty space!
Who wrought the ruin? who did fling
To earth, the lofty seated king?
What bade the fickle people, turn
The puppet they had dress'd, to spurn?
Where are they scatter'd, who did swear
His glory or disgrace to share?
'Twas love! 'twas wily woman's love
This mighty web of mischief wove!

LI.

" Oh Edward! let the lesson deep,
Deep in thy inmost heart descend!
'Twill be too late, when thou shalt weep,
Alone, o'er many an alien friend!
Oh! for a woman's smile wilt thou
Thy birth-right and thy hopes betray,
And for a toy, so poorly throw
Thy fame and friends away?
Thou wilt not!—If thou wilt—good night!

I will not share thine honour's blight!
De Vere turns from thee! thou shalt need
No friend to guard thee !—e'en thy foes
Shall bid thy harmlessness 'God speed,'
And scorn to ruffle thy repose!
Northumberland and Beaufort, come—
Forbidden to seek our native home,
The wide world is our way, and we are free to roam."

LII.

With misty eyes and cloudy brow,
In silent thought young Beaufort stood,
But starting now, his generous blood
Spread o'er his cheek the crimson glow :
"Dost thou forsake him, rough De Vere !
Why, fare-thee-well!—for Somerset,
He has not paid his father's debt,
His duty anchors here."

LIII.

Edward in sullen sorrow bore
Each hard reproof, and insult sore,

Perchance a voice within, combin'd
To goad and sting his tortur'd mind,
But now the faithful Beaufort's word
Fell trembling on a kindlier chord;
To bursting swell'd that struggling breast
To which the generous friend he press'd;
"Oh Beaufort! I conjure thee fly!
Mine, is an ill-starred destiny!
No less, to grateful memory dear,
Seek with the rest a new career,
Nor thus, to ruin persevere!
I do absolve thee! thou alone,
Strong as thou art in arm and will,
Canst thou uplift a fallen throne?
No! let yon frowning heav'n the dark decree fulfil!"

LIV.

While yet he spake, the beauteous cause
Of Edward's bliss, and Edward's bane,
Led by her brother, seeks the train
Of angry peers, and in the pause
With which surprize her presence greets

(For many a bosom breathless beats
With anxious wonder, what might lead
Her meekness to so bold a deed)
Sir Gerald speaks—“ Ye English lords,
I do beseech ye to suspend,
Till ye have listen'd to my words,
Or breath, or glance that may offend!
This lady's honour must not brook
The touch of one misgiving look!”

LV.

But Geraldine could well sustain,
Unhurt, the glance of fierce disdain,
Far other fear her soul does move,
She only shuns the glance of love,
And, shrinking, trembles at the thought
Of Edward's look with anguish fraught;
Sublime of soul, for him alone
She pours the deep, internal groan,
And shudders at his pangs, forgetful of her own!

LVI.

Pale yet resolved she stood, like one
Hopeless and fearless, who had done
With life's emotions!—Who can tell,
Beneath the calm and frozen rest
That seem'd to sway the marble breast,
If all within were well?
Yes, all was well! for she had striven
With her own heart, and conquer'd! Still
She walk'd on earth,—'twas heaven's will,—
But ev'ry thought from earth was riven,
Her soul, with all its hopes, securely dwelt in heaven!

LVII.

Sir Gerald paus'd,—a rushing tide
Of soften'd thought his speech enchain'd,
And, struggling with the warrior's pride,
The solemn word detain'd:
You might have deem'd the lady's heart
Had stol'n from his the sterner part,
And to his manly breast had given

The feelings she from her's had driven,
For, lo! her mild, upbraiding eye,
With calm yet mournful dignity,
Bids him be firm! Nay, e'en a smile,
A wan and wintry gleam, play'd o'er her lip the while!

LVIII.

" My Royal Liege!" Sir Gerald cries,
As to the ground he bent his knee,
" From hence thou shalt not see me rise
Till I have won a grace of thee!
My noble sister hath a vow
Which thou didst witness,—only thou
That vow mayst cancel;—it doth weigh
Hard on her spirit,—and I pray
Absolve my sister!—for her soul,
Touch'd by a heavenly messenger,
All earthly bondage would forswear,
And give a heart to heaven, untroubled, pure, and whole!"

LIX.

" Oh, think not, think not," Edward cried,
" To cheat me with such puny art!
My Geraldine! my bosom's bride,
My hope, my happiness, my pride!
Is thine a fickle, fleeting heart?
Ah, no!—The wavering world, and all
That wavering world may precious call,
For thy bright sake, I do resign!
And would'st thou quit me, Geraldine?
Sir Gerald! I do know thee well!
This is thy work! thou dost compel
Her gentle nature!—but resign
Thy rugged sway, for she is mine!
Mine, e'en in thy despite! art thou not, Geraldine?"

LX.

" My Liege! I came prepar'd to prove
The struggle of unhappy love!
And tho' these proud and fiery lords
May marvel at a brother's words,

I tell them,—he who could forego
A gem so bright, a prize so high,
Untouch'd by passion's agony,
May boast a nature, which doth know
No kindlier impulse than the brute
Who crops earth's verdant gifts, insensible and mute!"

LXI.

" Oh, God!" cried Edward, " Thou dost know
Why it doth please thee, that my life
A dark and turbid stream shall flow
Amid the rocks of strife!
Mark'd for thy vengeance, I have borne
The sentence from my earliest morn,
And borne unmurm'ring,—but my brain
No more the conflict may sustain;
It whirls distracted!—Geraldine,
Exult, exult!—the work is thine!—
Why dost thou linger?—Give it breath,
I do but wait the word, which madness brings, or death!

LXII.

" What, dost thou weep? Oh, let thine eye
Renounce the barbarous mockery!
Weep not for me! I cannot bear,
False maid, the insult of thy tear!
Weep not, but speak!—repeal thy vow!
Oh, linger not, but strike the blow!
Strike, Geraldine! and feast thine eye
Upon thy victim's agony!"

LXIII.

" Oh, Royal Edward! 'tis not scorn,
But hard-earn'd fortitude
That arms my heart to see thee torn
By conflicts, terrible and rude;
But conflicts *I* have borne!
There is a pang which mortal force
May never twice sustain,
That overpast, our vital course
Has done with joy or pain!

Thro' that rough passage I have gone,
And now with joy and pain have done!

LXIV.

" Edward! the sternest, hardiest breast
That ever burnish'd cuirass press'd,
Was never nerv'd by firmer will
Than doth my woman's bosom fill!
Edward, I go!—a heavenly spouse
Reclaims the rashly utter'd vows
Of human passion! and my breast
Doth hail the pure and holy rest
That consecrates the shrine for its Immortal Guest!

LXV.

" Oh, Edward! if a virgin's pray'r
May speed a warrior,—God shall bless
Thy path, as onward thou dost fare,
With smiling hope and glad success!
And when each little joy and grief,
Time's offspring, fugitive and brief,
Is past, and thou shalt wing thy way

To regions of eternal day,
Then will we meet!—Farewel, till then!
For in this nether world—we never meet again!"

END OF CANTO THE EIGHTH.

NOTES TO CANTO THE EIGHTH.

Long ages hence Plantagenet.—Stanza IV. l. 1.

"ALL agree that the name of Plantagenet signifies a broom-plant, and Buck tells us that Folk, the head of the family, about a century before the Conquest, was enjoined by the priest, as a punishment for his sins, to lash himself with that weapon, from which he acquired its name.

"This self-afflictor furnished England with seventy-four male descendants of his own name; fourteen of whom were sovereign princes, who filled the throne three hundred and thirty years, among whom only three lived to old age.

"In the contest between the houses of York and Lancaster, without including those who suffered in cold blood, by the axe and the halter, 105,000 Englishmen perished."—*Hutton's Bosworth Field.*

Oh, Worster! it avail'd thee nought.—Stanza VIII. l. 1.

"It is memorable of Tibetot, or Tiptoft, Earl of Worster, that, having been bred a student in Baliol College, Oxon, and attained to an high degree of learning, he went to Jerusalem, and there made his abode for some time. Thence travelling into other coun-

tries, he came to Venice and Padua, as also to Rome out of a great affection he had to see the Vatican Library, where he made such an elegant oration to Pope Pius II. that it drew tears from the eyes of his Holiness. Likewise that he translated into English the Orations of Publius Cornelius and Caius Flaminius, and wrote divers learned tracts, whereof Bale maketh mention.

"On the restoration of the house of Lancaster through the potency of Nevil, Earl of Warwick, he was necessitated to shift for himself, so that being found on the top of a high tree, in the forest of Waybridge, in the county of Huntingdon, he was brought to London, and judged to suffer death, whereupon he lost his head on Tower-hill."—*Dugdale's Baronage of England*, vol. ii. p. 41.

Oh, Exeter! what human breast.—Stanza XIX. l. 1.

In the 13th of the reign of Edward IV. he was found dead in the sea, betwixt Dover and Calais, though not known how he came thither. It is reported by Comines, that he saw this Duke in such great distress that he ran on foot, bare-legged, after the Duke of Burgundy's train, begging his bread for God's sake, but that he uttered not his name; and that when he was known, (being the nearest of the house of Lancaster, and that he had married a sister of King Edward IV.) he gave him a small pension to maintain his estate. This Duke of Exeter married Anne, daughter of Richard, Duke of York, and sister to King Edward IV., which Anne, at her own suit, was divorced from him, November 12th, ann. 1472, and married Sir Thomas St. Leger, Knight of the Body to King Edward IV.—*Dugdale's Baronage of England*, vol. ii. p. 82.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE NINTH.

I.

LOVE! get thee hence! Is this a clime
For thee to breathe in? Wilt thou dare
To wrestle with the boist'rous time?
How will thy myrtle blossoms bear
Th' encounter of so keen an air?
The gathering sky portentous scowls,
Wide o'er the land the war-blast howls,
And man, defying and defied,
Scorns to be led by gentler guide
Than ruthless, rash, remorseless Pride!

Love, get thee hence! Thy fickle star
Should vanish mid the clouds of war!
Oh, Love! thy dewy pinions spread,
And hide thee in the distant groves,
Where Peace still feeds the silver doves
Thy smiling mother bred!
Unwelcome stranger! Banish'd guest!
Vengeance usurps each panting breast,
And triumphs in the home where thou wert wont to rest!

II.

Now, warriors! search your souls, and there
If one remorseful thought ye find,
One ling'ring impulse, fond and kind,
Oh! give the trembler to the wind,
Lest it impede your bold career!
For you, life's charities are o'er!
The smile and tear of social life,
Scar'd by the grim, unnatural strife,
Exist for you no more!
Well, let them go! Fate waves ye on!

Look not behind! on, on ye brave!
The prize your burning wishes crave,
That meed by many a warrior won,
Shall crown your headlong course anon,—
Or vengeance, or a grave!

III.

To Gallia's shores fair Nevil came
Her cold, reluctant lord to meet,
And ne'er did fainter welcome greet
So bright, so proud a dame!
The bridegroom's tongue in secret swore
To breathe the breath of love no more,—
No whisper'd sighs, no soft caress,
No tear, the happy heart's excess,
Did that ungenial hymen bless!
What boots it, that in solemn tone
The mitred priest proclaims them one?
Heaven knows 'tis perjury! for ne'er
Those hearts the mutual bond shall wear,
Nor e'er one mingled thought in fond communion share!

IV.

Ambition triumphs! Edward's tongue
Has given the fatal sentence breath!
His hand is bound in fetters strong
Which nought shall break but death!
Chain'd by irrevocable vows,
A loveless, joyless, heartless spouse!
But let the secret canker prey
Deep in the centre, tho' it eat
The very springs of life away,—
Throw but the world beneath our feet!
Once crown the brow!—and who dares guess
That glory is not happiness!
Unseen the heart consumes,—but all,
Applauding, view the golden ball,
On every dazzled gazer's sight
The regal circlet flashes bright!
When shouting thousands hail us blest,
'Twere folly to believe the whisp'rer in our breast!

V.

"What fear we now?" Prince Edward cries,
"Come peril! for despair is brave!
We'll ride the whirlwind, stem the wave,
And wrest from fate the shining prize!
My heart is empty! glory come,
Oh! make the joyless void your home!
Lay me, where hearts forget to beat,
Or, lift me to the lofty seat,
Where fond regrets, weak memory's brood
Dare not upon our state intrude!
Swift on mine ear your tumult pour!
Anticipate the stormy hour!
I pant to plunge me in the fight
And prove the warrior's fell delight,
I long to drown the voice within
Amid the battle's deafening din!
Thou canst not cheat me, Glory!—though
Thy crown may never press my brow,
I'll claim thee with my latest breath,
And grasp thee in the pangs of death!"

VI.

Edward *was* mild as summer show'r
That falls at evening's fragrant hour,
And wakes to life the languid flow'r;—
Now sudden, wayward, fierce and strange,
All marvel at his nature's change!
His hurried step and fiery eyes,
The flushing of his hollow cheek,
His rapid, harsh, abrupt replies
An alter'd mood bespeak!
His smile is fled, his brow is bent,
And each august and modest grace
By partial nature early lent,
Has vanish'd from his frowning face!

VII.

But lo! the hurrying, busy world
Cries out for action! War again
Her gauntlet on the field has hurl'd,
Her bloody banner is unfurl'd!
Her vultures hover o'er the plain!
Hark! England calls her exiles home,

"Come, Royal Margaret! Edward come!"
Rouz'd by the summons, what shall stay
Their progress o'er the watry way?
Already to their longing eyes
Fair England's silver cliffs arise,
And lo! the long estranged band
Press once again their native strand!

VIII.

Loud welcomes hail the wand'rers home,
"Come, Royal Edward! Margaret come!"
Ten thousand caps are hurl'd on high,
Ten thousand voices rend the sky,
"Yea, and are these who shout so loud,
The same perverse and rebel crowd,
Who, thirsting for our sacred blood,
Drave us for shelter o'er the flood?
'Tis even so! But catch the gleam,
And drink ye of the running stream,
Nor sigh to think the stream shall fail,
And clouds the shining welkin veil!
The past, the present, are our own,

Fate cannot reach them! For the rest,
Let apathy's impervious zone
Wrap every mortal breast!

IX.

Earl Warwick, with a mighty host,
In England's centre holds his post:
York, late-repentant, vainly tried,
With many a wily, winning art,
To soften that vindictive heart,
And melt its frozen pride:
'Twas all too late,—the die is cast,
And Warwick's sacred word is past!
Howe'er his yearning thoughts may strive,
He never, never must forgive!

X.

Tho' York, with many a message mild,
For pardon and for peace implores,
Yet waits he not, till hoarse and wild,
Above his head the tempest roars;
Again his banner waves! Again

He courts the crowd in flatt'ring strain
Well skill'd to dazzle and deceive,
And thousands listen and believe!
Gloster, with reasons blunt and strong,
Compels and awes the wavering throng,
And Hastings, with auspicious smiles,
Partaker in his master's wiles,
The silly multitude beguiles!

XI.

Still Warwick, with his mighty band,
The pride and promise of the land,
Awaits, with heart prepar'd in vain,
The coming of the hostile train:
In vain, with loud and echoing vaunt,
In vain, with sharp and pointed taunt,
Did Warwick from his hold invite
His crafty rival to the fight;—
York, smiling, heard and understood,
And, with unchaf'd and temp'rate blood,
Wide, wide away from Warwick's towers
He leads his swift increasing powers!

Forc'd from his den, the angry bear*
Roaring pursues his wily prey,
Who now, with gay and gallant cheer,
With bended bow, and glancing spear,
Turns, and awaits the fray!

XII.

The sun which lit that morning's sky
A tearful tragedy beheld,
Ne'er did th' eternal trav'ller's eye
Look down on direr field!
On Barnet's ghastly plain contend
Brother with brother, friend with friend!
Full many a warrior's soul doth yearn
On him who bleeds beneath his steel,
But wrath and honour bid him spurn
At nature's soft appeal!
Spare may he not, tho' at his feet
His mother's son imploring lies,
He chides his heart, he shuts his eyes,
And o'er the breathing corse he spurs his courser fleet!

* Warwick's badge.

XIII.

Forth on that morn did Warwick ride,
Elate in hope, and swell'd with pride;
He felt as if the world in vain
Might wrestle with his matchless train,
Victorious ere the fight began,
His thoughts to greet the future ran;
He gaz'd on York's expectant bands,
As men whose fate was in his hands,
A victim host to slaughter come,
A mute, redeemless hecatomb!

XIV.

With him rode Montague,—no pride,
No hope within his bosom glow'd,
Scarce might that gallant breast abide
The heart's encumb'ring load!
His bright and plumed casque did press
A cheek all wan and colourless,
And as he heard the death-word given
And prick'd his courser to the charge,
Flinging to earth his shelt'ring targe,

One silent prayer he sent to heaven,
"Oh, Virgin Mother! bless the yew
Whose shaft brings peace to Montague!"

XV.

With spirits light, as tho' endow'd
With God's high attribute, their sight
Did reach the issue of the fight,
And saw beneath their banners bow'd
A prostrate, breathless, lifeless crowd,
De Vere and Beaufort gallopp'd forth
With the bold lion of the north,
As men on sportive warfare bent
Of chace, or gaudy tournament,
All sure, quite sure that fortune's smile
Dar'd not that day their hopes beguile,—
How vain the boast of man, if heaven frowns the while!

XVI.

On Dorset's coast the Prince and Queen,
Unconscious of th' eventful scene,
Still doubtful, linger on the strand

And wait Earl Warwick's beck'ning hand:
Oh, in that craving, keen suspense
How ready is the ear to seize
Each futile, wild intelligence
Opinion scatters on the breeze!
Then with what piercing scrutiny
Do hope and fear endue the eye
Which seeks in every stranger's face
Some note of good or ill to trace!
How does the busy, restless mind
Take hints from every murm'ring wind,
Well skill'd, from nothing to produce
Strange toys for froward fancy's use!

XVII.

Yet while suspense the hour doth chide,
That hour, which only seem'd to stay,
Is swept with all its cares away
Down time's oblivious tide!
So fares it now,—returning scouts
Dispel their vague and aimless doubts,
For each brings comfort, each has seen

Some flatt'ring presage:—one had been
Where Warwick's tow'rs in hoary pride
Frown o'er the dark Leam's winding tide,
And heard the ancient vassals boast
Their gallant earl's resistless host,
So strong, so true, it might have hurl'd
Its battle-gage against the world!

XVIII.

One scout by happy chance had met,
Beaming with hope, warm, sanguine, gay,
The bold and blooming Somerset,
As forth he led his stout array
Of rugged Cambrians,—vassals all
Who swore with him to stand or fall!
Impatient of the spur's assault,
Scarce would his fiery charger halt,
While the brief message Beaufort sends
Of comfort to his royal friends!

XIX.

" Tell them we strike the final blow!
This struggle ends the tedious strife!
York's star declines!—Upon my life
To-morrow sees his overthrow!
We have done with wild and wav'ring chance,
Now we strike sure! And it is meet
That straight from Weymouth they advance,
For many a gallant heart will beat
To lay the garland at their feet!
Bid them tow'rds Beaulieu,—let them rest
Securely in the woodland nest,
Till shouts disturb their brief repose,
Of Long live Lancaster! All hail the vermil Rose!"

XX.

Sweet Hope! how easily thy tale
Wins credence from the charmed ear!
How dost thou teach thy dupes to rail
On thy cold rival, halting Fear!
And they who cling to thee are wise,
'Tho' still from fraud to fraud they go,

Since what can truth and reason shew
To match thy fallacies!

XXI.

More needed not,—the Prince and Queen,
Forgetful what their eyes have seen,
Convinc'd by Beaufort's sanguine boast,
March inland, and forsake the coast,
And they do lead with them along
A motley, haste-collected throng
Of Gallic troops by Lewis lent,
Of mariners as wild and rude
As their own stormy element,
And men ne'er stain'd with warmer blood
Than oozes from the scaly prey,
When helpless on the sand it struggles life away!

XXII.

Hope quickly steps—soon overhead
The *forest's giant boughs are spread,

* The New Forest.

And o'er the turfy glade they tread
Where Tyrrell's chance-directed dart
Did pierce the hunter-king of yore,
And, guiltless, from the cruel heart,
Mid mortal pangs and writhing smart
Distill'd the vital gore!

XXIII.

Those emerald gems which bounteous spring
Is wont to scatter from her wing,
The anxious year in vain expects,
For spring her wonted gift neglects,
And wide the forest arms are toss'd,
Despairing of their vernal boast,—
Those broad grey arms, uncouth and drear,
Which still their brumal livery wear!
And ever as their limbs robust
Contended with the warring gust,
Advancing now, and now retreating,
By turns defeated and defeating,
The bands who march'd below beheld
The image of a well-fought field

Where neither conquer, neither yield,
And as they eyed the struggling grove,
Much did they muse on those in mortal coil who strove.

XXIV.

Now do the pure and blameless group
Of cowled brethren meekly greet
Of stranger-guests a warlike troop,
In Beaulieu's hallow'd seat:
The men of peace their home do share
With those who wave the torch of war,
Each humble cell and lowly bed
Lends shelter to some haughty head;
Where barefoot monks did silent glide,
Loud clangs the step of martial pride!
Now many a hoarse and noisy vaunt
Disturbs the full and solemn chaunt,
Mingling with arrogance the song
Sent heav'nward by the cloister'd throng!
Oh! evil are the days when those
Whom heaven for peace and worship chose,
E'en in their own sequester'd aisles,
Hear war's discordant voice, and meet her glitt'ring files!

XXV.

Twice over Beaulieu's hoary pile
The night has fall'n, and mornings twain
Peep'd thro' the boughs with sparkling smile
To gild the ancient fane!
'Tis noon, and since the earliest day
In woundless fight and mimic fray,
Beneath their royal chief's command,
Strive emulant the motley band:
Forth with the rest Queen Margaret rode
To solace her impatient mind,
And for an hour to cast the load
Of keen suspense behind:

XXVI.

"Enough, enough!" she cries. "'Tis now
No season for the mimic fight!
Forbear! Disperse ye quick! For lo!
The harbinger of weal or woe
Doth greet our anxious sight!

XXVII.

" Who art thou, stranger? Quickly say,
And what thy tidings? Thou dost bear
Rude tokens of a desperate day!
Oh, speak! Beshrew thy silence drear!"
The stranger from his saddle leapt,
And bent at Margaret's foot the knee,
Who back in dire amazement stept,
Mistrusting what her eyes did see,
" Beaufort! it may not, cannot be!
I know it now, thou com'st to tell
A tale of ruin, and to toll
Of our fair hopes the dismal knell!
Rise Beaufort, and uplift thy soul!
Trembling and speechless! Somerset!
Nay then the tale *is* told! our ruin is complete!"

XXVIII.

'Twas Somerset!—In sooth the eye
Might on his form dwell doubtingly,
And e'en a brother's tongue might ask,
Who art thou? On his batter'd casque

The snowy plume has ceas'd to float,
Unseemly hangs his blazon'd coat
In blood-stain'd remnants! his right hand
Still grasps the fragment of his brand,
But lance, nor battle-axe, nor shield
Bears Beaufort from the deadly field!
O'er his rich armour's glitt'ring pride
A foul, ensanguin'd crust has dried,
And now, the lifted aventayle
Reveals a cheek so icy pale,
An eye so eloquent,—the tongue
May well the faltering pause prolong!

XXIX.

" My friend," cried Edward, " thou hast stood
Unmov'd in many a field of blood;
Nay, I have seen thee smile, while fate
Pursued us with her bitt'rest hate,
But never did mine eye behold
So blanch'd thy cheek, thy cheer so cold!"

XXX.

"Yea, am I pale?—Alas! my heart
But feebly takes my manhood's part!
Oh! I have seen the blackest hour
That ever on our hopes did low'r!
Renown looks pale! the chief who long
Was the proud burthen of her song,
Has vail'd his might, has clos'd his eyes,
And sleeps, on earth no more to rise!
Mingling their life-blood, side by side
Lie the brave Nevils, ne'er to wake
Till that dread trumpet echoeth wide
Which must this evil world to its foundations shake!

XXXI.

"When the last Nevil dropt, my brain
Lost all its counsel,—and my steed,
Goaded by phrenzy, blind and vain,
Plung'd on with hot and headlong speed
I knew not whither! Ne'er before
Did I so pant for human gore!
As on I rush'd, a well-known tongue

Cried feebly from the trampled throng,
"Oh turn thee, Somerset! and save
One true Lancastrian from the grave,
For e'en the hungry grave to-day
Is sated with illustrious prey!
It was the Irish knight, my hand
Had fain his dying fingers wrung,
But as I stoop'd, some coward brand,
Aim'd from behind, my charger stung;
Mad with the smart, he started wide
And flung me in the tepid tide
That gush'd from many a gaping wound
Of those who prostrate lay around!
What more I know not,—but I know
That, scap'd from yon unsparing strife,
I stand, with motion, strength and life,
To Rudolph's pow'rful arm, and valiant heart I owe!"

XXXII.

He ceas'd,—for Percy and De Vere
With drooping crests, and sullen cheer,
Slow fugitives, together came,

Blushing to live, as life were shame!
With them rode Wenlock:—as the eye
Survey'd his spotless panoply,
His broider'd cincture floating fair,
His light plume dancing in the air,
The trapping of his untir'd steed
Whose chanfron blaz'd with jewels rare,—
Might not that eye, with doubting heed,
Make question of Lord Wenlock's deed?

XXXIII.

Wrapt for awhile in musings deep
The Prince stood silent:—now, like one
Who starts from long absorbing sleep,
And finds the recent vision gone,
He looks around, "Is it e'en so?
Does that proud forehead lie so low?
Methinks, I scarce can comprehend
The wondrous change! Does Warwick rest?
Warwick! within thy mighty breast
Do wrath and pride no more contend?
Why then, if *thou* canst sleep so sound,

So dreamless, on the naked ground,
There's hope for ev'ry heart! all strife shall find an end!

XXXIV.

"Come, rouze ye, Lords! nor let mischance
Amaze us with her withering glance!
Our cause survives, and we will try
One struggle more with destiny!
Speak, Beaufort! did we lose the day
In gallant, hard, and even play,
Or was there treason?—Montague
Lies near his brother;—he was true;—
But where was Clarence?—did he stand
Where honour station'd him—or, fann'd
By flatt'ry's breath, dissolve away,
And shew the flouting world that princes can betray?"

XXXV.

"My Royal Liege, no time had I
To look around for treachery!
My own brave Cambrians, where they stood,
Their duty done, lie heap'd in blood,

Their leader's sorrow, and his pride!
The noble Montague,—he died
Bright honour's martyr! Every art
That e'er successful flatt'ry knew
Was practis'd on his generous heart,
He stood them all,—and perish'd true!
He stood, immutable and stern,
E'en while his inmost soul did yearn
On him, whose long-lov'd voice besought him to return!

XXXVI.

"I cannot tell!—But there be those
Of cooler spirits, who might stay
To scan the order of the fray,
Men brave of speech, who for the blows
Which mid the peril of the field,
Remorseful, they forbore to wield,
Will give ye words! Lord Wenlock, thou
Hast wip'd the toil-drops from thy brow,
And doff'd the harness thou didst wear
On Barnet Plain for fresher gear,
Thou hast had breathing-time, and well

Mayst play the orator, and tell
How this disastrous chance befell!"

XXXVII.

The varying hue of Wenlock's cheek
A craven conscience did bespeak,
And he did cast a wistful glance
On his unstain'd, unbroken lance;
He could have curs'd the spotless weed
That so betray'd him, and the speed
Devoid of counsel and of heed,
Which bade him quit the battle-plain
Ere he had borrow'd glory's stain!
His spirit sicken'd, but his tongue
In martial phrase repell'd the wrong:

XXXVIII.

"Injurious Beaufort!—By the brand
That knighthood on my shoulder press'd,
I do adjure thee, hand to hand,
Here, in the presence where we stand,
To take thy insult from my crest!

Lo, at thy foot my gauntlet lies!—
I do defy thee! and will teach
Thy tongue the use of safer speech!
Ere fades the light in yonder skies
Thou shalt retract thy base, unknightly calumnies!"

XXXIX.

"Peace, gentle lord! Some tilting day,
When this our rugged work is past,
I'll break a lance with thee, but stay
Till leisure lends us hours to waste!
Then will I don my bravest gear,
And hang a streamer on my spear,
And we will run a bold career,
While lordlings gay, and ladies bright,
Shall wonder at each warrior's might!"

XL.

"What! are ye both the friends of York!
Fie, Beaufort! leave this factious work!"
Prince Edward cries,—"and, Wenlock, thou,
Resume thy gage, and clear thy brow!

By heaven, whichever of the twain
Shall wake this irksome broil again,
Is half a traitor! Brave De Vere,
Pour thou into thy Prince's ear
The heavy story!—Say, did force
Or guile impede our fortune's course?
Why did we fail? Say, how did fate
Accomplish its relentless hate?"

XLI.

" Oh, my liege Lord! the stars in vain
Had frown'd upon our matchless train,
Had all been true! Your rival's art
Did find the path to Clarence' heart!
That courteous, kind, fair-spoken lord
Did swallow back his honour's word,
And England's annals shall record
Clarence a traitor!—May the blood
Of his renowned *father rest
For ever on his burthen'd breast,
And ever, in his lighter mood,

* His father-in-law the Earl of Warwick.

When his heart laughs, may conscience tell,
To dash his short-liv'd mirth, how the brave Nevils fell!"

XLII.

"Now, by my knighthood," Beaufort cries,
"I never trusted him! His eyes,
Methought, did ever look askance
With such unsettled, furtive glance
As if he fear'd they might betray
What mischief in the centre lay,
And tell the world, how wide apart
Were his smooth tongue and hollow heart!
Did ye ne'er mark how soft and slow
His speech upon the ear did flow?
Why did we trust him? Were we blind?
The man is character'd and sign'd
With ev'ry mark and note that hints a double mind!"

XLIII.

"Well, Lords! and shall we stand to gaze
On our own ruin, reasoning slow
Whence the bolt fell? Enough we know,

Our hopes have perish'd in the blaze!
'Tis o'er with us! Yea, e'en tho' fate
Relenting view'd the work of hate,
The blow is struck! 'Twere now too late!
I am a woman!—Witness all,
Ye, who do gaze upon my fall,
How I have trod;—my spirits' force
Still wrestling with misfortune's course;
When from yon skies the thunder broke,
Fronting its very aim and stroke!
A glorious warfare! But 'tis o'er!—
Strong is the arm of fate! We fall to rise no more!

XLIV.

" Still, mid the wreck of mightier things,
One humble wish tenacious clings
To our quell'd bosom!—From our pride
Has heav'n, still frowning, turn'd aside,
But this is nature's pray'r, no claim
For crowns or sceptres, pow'r or fame!
God grant, that soon yon briny flood
May roll its blessed wave between

My Edward, and those hunters keen,
Who follow in his track, and pant to drink his blood!"

XLV.

"Immortal Anjou! does *thy* heart
Espouse yon vile Usurper's part?
No, no! 'tis but a feint to prove
The mould and mettle of our love!"
Cried Somerset. "Why, thou hast been
Our sunshine thro' each arduous scene!
Thy voice did rouze the dullest clod
That e'er in havoc's footsteps trod!
Warm'd by thy smile, each lumpish clown
Fought, as he struggled for a crown,
Or knew the meaning of renown!
What, thou! the soldier's heart and soul!
Wilt *thou* forsake us at the goal?
Trust me, thy speech blows colder breath
Than Clarence' flight, or Warwick's death,
And heaven forfend the winds should bear
Such whisper on the common ear!
Grant me thy patience, Royal Dame,

And I will shew thee, tho' our cause
Now for a little while doth pause,
We need not lower our lofty aim—
Ours are the chances yet, and we shall win the game!

XLVI.

" Now mark, I pray! Yon boasting York,
Right weary of the rugged work,
His task of yesterday, doth now
In London rest his unhelm'd brow!
Those shallow burghers soon forget
Of sugar'd speech the heavy cost,
They love yon false Plantagenet,
I know their gates are open set
For him, and his rebellious host!
Gross-witted knaves! But mark my words!
Yon train of frolic, feasting lords,
E'en now have doff'd their iron coats
And feed their ears with softer notes
Than the war trumpet breathes! Not one
But dreams the glorious game is won!

And let them dream,—we'll wind a horn
Shall rouze them yet, some summer morn!

XLVII.

"Now, while these minions of success
Lay by their lances, and repose
In their hard-purchas'd idleness,
We will be busy!—for the blows
Their falchions on our harness laid
Must be with triple measure paid!
Now mark the means!—Northumberland,
The unquell'd lion of the north,
Still holds reserv'd a hardy band,
Prompt when he roars to issue forth,
Fierce border-men, whose daily food
Insipid were, unbought with blood!
He shall go rouze them! Bold de Vere
Must to the midland country wend,
There let him once his banner rear,
And many a lurking, secret friend
Will start from covert! Tow'rds the west
My errand lies:—this well-known crest,

Bruis'd as it is, shall beckon swarms
Of loyal Welchmen bred to arms!
There too brave Jasper, Pembroke's Earl,
A native banner shall unfurl:
What! panic-smitten, shall we cow'r,
Dishearten'd by a cloudy hour,
With means like these, and leave the land,
Free pasture, to yon wasteful band?
No! the base tale would never die!
We should be chronicled, and live
In shame thro' all futurity,
For ev'ry coward's act would our disgrace revive!"

XLVIII.

"Why I was born where eagles build,"
Said Percy, "and they taught my glance
Still to gaze sunward,—fate nor chance
Shall ever raze from Percy's shield
The true heart's motto, 'Esperance!'
No time to muse and reason now
Of what *may* fall,—th' unbending will,
The hardy, upright, open brow,

The foot that forward wendeth still
Shall aye a glorious lot fulfil,
Alike to fame and honour dear,
However closes its career,
In regal state inthron'd, or stretch'd on timeless bier!

XLIX.

" I am with thee, Beaufort! And my soul,
Full of Hope's promises, would fain
E'en now stretch forward to the goal,
And try the gallant race again!
Yet, Beaufort, shall we risk the whole
On one brief stroke? Methinks 'twere good
These vials fair of sacred blood
Were kept unbroken and unspent,
Till Time reveals th' unborn event!
Let them again to Gallia's court
Where danger's arm is all too short
To strike their safety,—while we toil
To make this rank and weedy soil
A goodly garden, meet to bear
Our bright and fragrant Rose, the glory of the year!"

L.

" Earl Percy," cried the royal youth,
" I tell thee thou dost grossly err,
If thus thou deem'st of Lancaster!
No! When *we* flee the coming fight,
They are fools who shall defend our right!
Is life so precious, we must fain
Redeem a forfeit year or twain
On such foul terms! Thou dost mistake!
I tell thee, Earl, the rocky pile,
The root and basis of our isle,
Vex'd by the wave shall sooner shake,
Than we our honour's pledge so meanly will forsake!"

LI.

" And I do tell thee thou wert sent
To govern heroes!" Beaufort cries.
" Fate does but try thee,—the event
Shall prove heav'ns counsels just and wise!"
" Hush, Beaufort, hush! Nor thou nor I
May scan the secrets of the sky,

Nor may we call that Pow'r unkind
Who gives us the unshrinking mind,
A gift of more enduring grace
Than all the smiles on Fortune's face!
Yes! Heav'n shall still reward the brave,
For even tho' it may deny
The kindling bliss of victory,
One prize we needs must win, a proud and glorious grave!

LII.

" Now, Lords, we part! Oh! that the day
Of our last trial were at hand!
Our soul, impatient of delay,
Counts wearily the sluggish sand!
Oh! be not dull! Remember, friends,
And faster urge your coursers' speed,
How slow with him the minute wends
Whose panting heart expects the deed!
Farewel, farewel! When next we meet
'Twill be to end this feverish coil,

To lift us to our native seat,
Or lay us in that common soil
Where life's tir'd lab'rer rests from sublunary toil!"

END OF CANTO THE NINTH.

NOTES TO CANTO THE NINTH.

Lie the brave Nevils ne'er to wake.—Stanza XXX. l. 10.

HALL says, "He" (Warwick) "comforted his men beyng wery, sharpely quicknyng and earnestly desiryng them with hardy stomackes to bere out this laste and finall brunt of the battaill, and that the feld was even at an ende: but when his souldiers beyng sore wounded, weried with so long a conflict, did geve little regarde to his wordes, hee beyng a man of a mynde invincible rushed into the middest of his enemies, where as he aventured so farre from his awne compaignie to kill and sley his adversaries, that he could not be rescued, was in the middes of his enemies striken downe and slaine. The Marques Montacute thynkyng to succor his brother whiche he sawe was in grete jeopardey, and yet in hope to obtein the victory, was likewise overthrowen and slaine."—*Hall's Chronicle*, p. 246.

On him whose long-lov'd voice besought him to return.
St. XXXV. l. 13.

"The common people saied that the Kyng was not so jocund nor so joyous for the destruccion of Therle, but he was more sorrowful and dolorous for the death of the Marques, whom both he knew, and it appered to other, to be inwardly his faithful friend: for

whose only sake he caused bothe their bodies to bee with their auncestors solemnly entered at the Priory of Bissam."—*Hall's Chronicle*, p. 297.

Strong is the arm of fate!—we fall to rise no more!
St. XLIII. l. 15.

"When Margaret harde all these miserable chaunces and misfortunes, so sodainly, one in another's necke to have taken their effect, she, like a woman all dismaied for feare, fell to the ground, her harte was perced with sorowe, her speache was in a maner passed, all her spirites were tormented with malencholy. The calamitie and misery of her time she detested and abhorred, her unstable and contrariant fortune she stedfastly blamed and accused," &c.—*Hall's Chronicle*, p. 297.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

CANTO THE TENTH.

I.

ALAS! how beautiful! how strong!
How flush'd with hope! how warm with life!
Yon glitt'ring, sparkling, victim-throng
Press forward to the strife!
What nervous arms! what lofty crests!
What beaming eyes! what throbbing breasts!
Hark! how they boast!—mark! how they tread!
Yet heav'n has pass'd their sentence dread,—
'Tis doomsday!—Like a morning dream,
A flash, a breath, an April gleam,

They were, and are not!—All the throng,
So proud, so beautiful, so strong,—
Their place is void, their forms are fled!
Fate frowns from yonder skies, and they are withered!

II.

'Tis May!—A bright and cloudless morn
Smiles on the world,—on ev'ry thorn
The newly open'd blossom glows,
And rich the woodland music flows!
Each hails the promise for his own,
As if the beam on nature's face
Shone forth his single crest to grace,
And spake to him alone!
Alas! the welkin's dazzling eye
But mocks the fleeting pageantry!

III.

In weary march the night had pass'd,
And Lancaster with joy espied
Fair Tewksbury's hoary tow'rs at last
Reflected in Sabrina's tide.

Gloster had clos'd her gates, and sent
Loud insults from each battlement,
Nor did the rebel town make known
Her enmity in scoffs alone,
For many a mile, from copse and dell,
As onward pass'd the armed train,
An arrowy show'r around them fell,
And many a gallant form lay slain,
Unseen the hand that wrought his bane;
But as the shades of night withdrew
And morn's wide prospects burst to view,
Of day's revealing glance afraid,
Dispers'd each darkling ambuscade.

IV.

Night's cares and toils, and lurking foes,
Were vanish'd; each elastic mind,
Refresh'd and cheer'd, already throws
The weary thought behind:
Bold Beaufort, who the vaward held,
As morning's dewy mists dispell'd,
And Tewksb'ry's turrets tipt with light

Rose on his view, a welcome sight,
Thro' all his host the signal past,—
That signal to the soldier dear,
Which bids him from his toils forbear
And pause a little while, to taste
The brief repose and light repast!
The shrilling horn in echoes loud
From line to line the message sent,
When, lo! unmarshall'd and unbent,
The mute and pompous armament
Tumultuous mix, a murm'ring crowd!

V.

On Severn's banks in gladsome groups,
In thoughtless mirth, the scatter'd troops
Waste the free hour;—some cast aside
Their heavy harness, and divide
With vig'rous arm th' opposing tide;
Outstretch'd in idleness, a few
The busier throng supinely view;
O'er some, the transient slumbers steal,
While tougher hearts, averse and loth

Mild nature's gentle rule to feel,
Do mock their prostrate comrades' sloth;—
Loud laughter, song, and jest make known
That freedom hails the hour her own.

VI.

Nor did the crested chieftains scorn
Their cumbrous helms aside to throw,
And woo the freshness of the morn
To fan each galled brow,
And many a richly blazon'd shield
Lay scatter'd on the dewy field;
But the loud laugh, the song, the jest,
Blythe echoes of the careless breast,
Rose from the humbler swarm,—the rest,
Tho' thrown aside their outward gear,
Did still their bosom-burthens bear!

VII.

Prince Edward in the centre line
With Wenlock's did his pow'rs combine,
And Margaret, with her Royal Heir,

The weary midnight march did share:
Behold! on milk-white palfrey borne,
Her light casque sparkling in the morn,
With rested lance,—her slender waist
Within the golden cuirass cas'd,
Upraising her undazzled eye
To meet the fair and flatt'ring sky,
By hours of irksome toil unquell'd,—
The English Pallas! Hark! how loud
The trumpet-peal, and shouting crowd,
Proclaim her presence on the field!

VIII.

Now many a Knight, with duteous heed,
Press'd forward, emulant to gain
From Margaret's hand the gemmed rein,
Or from the golden stirrup freed,
To lift her from the barded steed,
And proud and prosp'rous was his chance
Whose speed obtain'd a fav'ring glance
Or won the charge of shield or lance!
Nor did their ardent strife aspire

To loftier meed, or title higher
Than matchless Anjou's trusted squire.

IX.

Mid all those chieftains, scarce a brow
The lapse of so much time might boast
As robs youth's ringlets of their glow,
O'ersprinkling them with autumn's frost!
They were the sons of sires who all
Had early heard the fatal call
Which bade them to their stripling heirs
Forego their troubles, toils and cares!
War's blast had o'er their cradles blown
Its hoarse stern lullaby;—the brand
Flash'd in the unscar'd infant's hand,
The tiny morion grac'd his brow;
Each lisping orison implor'd
The God of battles to impart
An iron arm, a lion heart,
A foot which might not turn, a ruin-dealing sword!

X.

And now as varying nature sways,
Each Knight the hour of pause bestows,—
While one in fierce indignant phrase
The losses of the night displays,
And counts the unavenged blows,
Another quits the past to scan,
With wiser heed, the future plan;
In social parley some combine,
While others, mute and saturnine,
With pleached arms, and eye, whose beam
To anchor in the earth does seem,
In secret commune with their heart,
Nor deign its whispers to impart:

XI.

But lo! with every foaming steed
Press'd onward to its utmost speed,
As rushing to the charge, De Vere
And Devon's Earl lead up the rear!
Anon the trumpet brays aloud,
And soon the wide-dispersed crowd

Start from their idleness,—the call
Of that shrill horn doth rouze them all!
" 'Tis stirring time!—The foe is nigh!
York comes apace! This hour demands
Keen heads I trow, and busy hands!
The next decides your destiny!"

XII.

Inur'd to battle, every heart
The signal hails! In rapid change,
The scatter'd squadrons form and range,
And spear, and battle-axe, and dart,
Each knows its station; those who lay
Slumb'ring or sportive on the mead,
Now form the close and bright array,
Prepare the shaft, or rule the steed,
And wait, with breast resolv'd, the deed
Which stills that breast for aye, or bids another bleed!

XIII.

The chiefs who lead the triple host,
A brief yet solemn parley hold,

When Somerset, fierce, sanguine, bold,
Each cooler counsel cross'd.
"For me," cried Oxford, "I have bought,
And will maintain with lance and sword,
The right to speak my bosom's thought
With free, unquestion'd word!
God sees my heart! Its pulses beat
Keen for the charge with gen'rous heat,
But pausing judgment does arrest
The rapid motion of my breast!
By heav'n, to-day we must not fight!
Wait but a few swift-waning hours,
To-morrow brings us Tudor's pow'rs,
Then shall ye strive with equal might,
But if ye now persist, ye'll think of this ere night!"

XIV.

"Not fight to-day!" cried Somerset.
"Thy words would tempt me to forget
That I have seen thee play a part
Which vouches for thy manly heart!
Think on't ere night! Why what care I?

'Tis *now* we're call'd by destiny,
And we are ready!—Say, De Vere,
Couldst thou endure, like timid deer,
To hold in view the breathless race,
With York's hot blood-hounds full in chase?
Lord Oxford, I do hope thy sword,
Ere this bright morn is pass'd away,
Shall proudly contradict thy word,—
For, Oxford, we *must* fight to-day!"

XV.

" Yea," cried the Prince, " behold at last
That hour which crowns the strife of years!
And it *shall* end the woeful waste
Of England's blood, and England's tears!
I hail its advent! Even now
I feel a stranger in my soul,
A wild, exulting, kindling glow,—
A transport, such as conquerors know,
When glory crowns them at the goal!
Blest be the omen! Is't not time
To close the scene of woe and crime?

This hour *shall* close it!—Ne'er again
Will I turn back from battle-plain,
A beaten fugitive! Ere even
With parting smile shall gild the west,
This sword shall triumph win, or rest,
Victory on earth,—or, peace in heaven!"

XVI.

"Give me earth's triumphs!" Margaret cries,
"This nether world concludes my schemes,
Ne'er could I teach my soul to prize
The moping beadsman's dreams!
Victory on earth! Friends! to this hour
A whole life's energies are due!
Whate'er of ardour, skill, or pow'r
Your noble breasts imbue,
Call to the conflict! Loudly call!
This grasping hour demands them all!
'Tis a vast moment! 'Tis the goal
Tow'rds which, thro' striving years, the soul
With untir'd vigour bent its force,—
We touch the limits of the course!"

XVII.

Was it the smile of hope that play'd
O'er Margaret's brow as thus she said?
'Twas not the bright auspicious ray
That warms the fair and cloudless day,
And o'er the tranquil prospect glows,—
'Twas sudden, transient, ominous!
But Beaufort, blind to portents ill,
Presumptuous, confident, obey'd
His own warm heart's impetuous thrill,
By nought oppos'd, by nought dismay'd,
He deem'd the glare of Margaret's eye
The beacon-light to victory!

XVIII.

As thro' the martial ranks she rode
To praise the keen, the slow to goad,
With kindling words to heat the cold,
To madden and inflame the bold,
Beaufort with flashing glance beheld
War's Genius tow'ring o'er the field!
" Margaret!" he cried, " our hopes we fix

On thee, our high Imperatrix!
Did Pallas rouze her Greeks to war,
And shalt thou vainly bid us dare?
Undaunted woman! May his name
Be branded with eternal shame,
Whose lukewarm blood can feel thy smile
And keep its lazy course the while!
Nay, an 'twere heaven's sublime decree
'Twere pride enough to die for thee!
But we do hope to win the race,
And sun us in the dazzling grace
Elicited by joy from thy victorious face!"

XIX.

From soul to soul the spirit flies!
Like stricken flint, the dullest hind
Sends forth in sparkles from his eyes
The new-sprung ardours of his mind;
Thus eager for the fray they stand,
Impatient for the coming storm,
When lo! a venerable form

With mitred brow, and crozier'd hand,
Meekly salutes the threat'ning band:

XX.

"Alas!" he said, "if tear or pray'r
Might quench the bursting flames of war,
Long, long had England ceas'd to feel
The wounds her cruel children deal!
I come not here to bid ye stay,—
No, no! pursue your wasteful way!
Ruthless, unhumaniz'd and stern,
Stay not to think, to feel, to yearn!
Yon vulture hovering in the air
Expects from you his horrid fare,
God's image, mangled, marr'd, defac'd,
Nor waits in vain the dire repast!
Go on! your mad career fulfil!
I may not curb your impious will!

XXI.

"Unhappy Queen! to thee I come,
To save thee from this hideous hour,

And lead thee to our hallow'd home,
Where, peaceful, thou may'st seek the Pow'r
Whose voice can soothe each warring sense,
And calm the anguish of suspense!
And we will weep with thee, for ne'er
In vain did sorrow claim our tear;
And we with thine our knees will bend,
And we with thine our pray'rs will blend
That heaven with patient humbleness
The long resisting heart may bless,
And teach it, whatsoe'er betide,
To mourn without despair, or triumph without pride!"

XXII.

"Oh holy father! if indeed
To mutter'd pray'r, or counted bead,
The distant pow'rs of heaven give heed,
I know not:—But 'tis now too late
By humbleness to conquer fate!
Long since these eyes have done with tears!
Harden'd by many wintry years,
My heart its wrongs unshrinking bears!

My lips have ceas'd to supplicate,
My knees to bend, and I do wait
With resolute and settled soul
Till I have seen, and prov'd the whole!

XXIII.

"Know, holy father, at my birth
Fate chose me from the forms of earth,
Chose me, to tread while wand'ring here
A high, a wonderful career,
And on I must, till envious time
Shall quench me in my path sublime!
No after-chronicle shall say,
That peril turn'd me from my way!
I *will* go on!—My spirit high,
Thus, meets in bold response, the call of destiny!

XXIV.

"Hark! they are coming! Didst thou hear?
It was York's trumpet-peal that rang!
Nay—list! Methinks the heavy clang
Of armed thousands, trampling near,

Advancing fills my anxious ear!—
Eventful crisis! in my breast,
How my heart bounds! Oh Somerset!
This moment cancels many a debt!
No pardon now,—our after-hours
We'll lend to mercy!—but to-day
Let rebel blood descend in show'rs!
Give famish'd vengeance scope and sway
And let her sweep the cumber'd way!"

XXV.

Beaufort had form'd, in order good,
Upon a fair and sloping down,
His battle westward of the town,
Of ancient elms a spreading wood,
All smiling in the pride of spring,
Wav'd o'er the rear, and dexter wing;
Already did a trench profound,
Protecting, gird the camp around,
For many a chief's illustrious hand
Had labour'd with the common band:
The Abbey bells were pealing loud,

And from the tow'rs and ramparts high
The Red Rose pennons flaunted proud
To flout the coming enemy:

XXVI.

But, thro' the iron files below
A ghastly stillness does prevail,
As tho' each bright and glitt'ring row
Of men and steeds encas'd in mail,
Were but a lifeless pageant show!
A deadlier threat that pause conveys
Than anger's loudest, bitterest phrase!
Such silence holds the sulph'rous sky
Ere falls the bolt mid deaf'ning peals,
Or, torn by inward agony,
The globe beneath our footstep reels,
And shudd'ring time and nature fear
The limit of their reign is near!

XXVII.

Led briskly on by hope and ire
York's squadrons to the charge advance,

And many an eye-ball flashes fire
Responsive to the morning's glance:
The Bristled Boar their vaward leads,
Grim, fatal, bloody!—Next succeeds,
With jewell'd crest and gilded casque,
Meet for the tourney or the masque,
The White Rose Monarch;—near him rides
The whirling Clarence, while the rear,
With heart unknown to care or fear,
The gallant Hastings guides!

XXVIII.

As on the mighty mass doth roll,
Mute, motionless, the expectant band,
Prepar'd in body and in soul,
In grim array do stand;
With settled gaze they mark the foe
And aim in thought the fatal blow;
But the foe halts,—an arrow's reach
Doth scarce each hostile front divide,
When Gloster's trumpet echoing wide

Suspends at once the following tide,
And claims the previous speech!

XXIX.

"Ye men of England! from your king
Of bosom placable and soft,
Oft outrag'd, yet relenting oft,
A kind appeal I bring!
Renounce your rebel thoughts, and leave
Yon Boy, to whom ye madly cleave!
Bid this unquiet spirit cease!
Go! till your fathers' fields in peace,
And from your widow'd mothers' face
With pious hand the tear-drop chase!
Go, go! repent and be forgiven!
Our mercy, like the beam of heaven,
Shines on ye all!—on all but those
From whose rash pride the mischief flows;
But they have so deform'd the time,
So stain'd the land with woe and crime,
The long abhorring sky demands
Their expiatory blood from our avenging hands!

XXX.

" My gentle countrymen! I feel
Your hearts confess the kind appeal!
Misled awhile, but not perverse,
Convinc'd and touch'd with gen'rous shame,
Ye own your injur'd sov'reign's claim,
And, as remorseful ye disperse,
Your own mistaken thoughts ye blame,
And your deluders curse!
Well may ye curse them! What are ye
But breathing counters, cast away
From yon young gamester's hand in this most desp'rate play?

XXXI.

" Redeem yourselves! From sleep awake!
Your ruin, and your bane, forsake!
Yield up yon Tigress, who for years
On England's blood, and England's tears,
Has fed,—yet still, with hungry roar,
Hark! unappeas'd, she raves for more!
Yield her, and with his dam, resign

Yon sprout of Gaunt's usurping line,
A meet sin-offering to assuage
Th' exterminating Spirit's rage,
Ere yet across a land of graves
The gust that sweeps our isle, unfelt and lonely raves!"

XXXII.

Now do the Red Rose squadrons pour
Their stormy answer,—the mute crowd
No more in silent anger low'r,
But with defiance stern and loud,
With shaken spear and clashing shield,
Wrath's bursting thunder, rings the field!
Ten thousand tongues with one accord
Lift to the skies the battle-word,
Wide echo doubling on the ear
"England! St. George! and Lancaster!"

XXXIII.

"Thou hast thy answer!" Beaufort cries.
"No! not a peasant in our host
But thy false offer dares despise

And laughs to scorn thy thriftless boast!
Since Clarence left us, in our bands
Not one disloyal traitor stands!
Misshapen Richard! tho' thy soul
Doth well befit its lodging foul,
Yet would I fain the tenant chase
E'en from its writh'd, and loathed case
To that dark world, where, haply, dwell
Shapes that resemble thine, abhorr'd, prodigious, fell!

XXXIV.

"And, for this war effeminate
My fiery soul doth execrate,
Oh! let us quit this strife of words,
And trust our meaning to our swords!"
"Content!" cried Richard. "Ye who wear
The White Rose in each loyal breast,
Come on! and let your strokes attest
What cause ye serve,—whose men ye are!
And mark me, friends,—the fate of years
Hangs on the deeds we do to-day!
Fast bar your bosoms and your ears,

That no weak pleadings find their way!
This hydra-headed mischief now
To one resolv'd, home-driv'n blow
Shall yield for ever,—and the hand
That spares one foe to day, doth wound its native land!"

XXXV.

Loud blow the trumpets! Still the band,
By Beaufort led, unshrinking stand,
Presenting to the charging foe
Of glitt'ring spears a bristly row:
The troops, as yet scarce warm with fight,
Before the yawning trench recoil,
But when the blood begins to boil,
Inflam'd by rage, and smart, and toil,
I ween 'twill prove a barrier slight;
And e'en divided thus, their wrath
Finds thro' the air a distant path,
Already many a shaft is dyed
In life's red tincture, many a spear
Comes whizzing on the destin'd ear
Its fatal message, tho' the tide

Of rushing war suspended hangs,
Nor on the deafen'd sense the shock of battle clangs!

XXXVI.

Cold-blooded Gloster inly laugh'd
To think how angry Beaufort chaf'd,
For well he knew, his ardent breast
Such pausing warfare did detest;
Fresh fuel on the fire he flings,
And goads him with a thousand stings,
Hoping, from Beaufort's rash disdain,
To borrow vantage, and anon
To mock his reason from her throne,
Till passion's phrenzied voice should urge him to his bane.

XXXVII.

"By all the saints, it may not be
That yon dull, lifeless effigy—
Howbeit, his presumptuous shield
Bears royal blazon on its field—
Is that same Somerset, whose name

So glitters on the roll of fame,
Audacious, rapid, fiery, rash,
War's quick-destroying lightning flash!
It may not be!—'tis Beaufort's coat,—
But either fame with false applause
Hath Beaufort gilded, or, I wot,
His spirit, generous, keen, and hot
Would ill endure th' ignoble pause!
No, no! If Somerset were here,
Ne'er would he sit yon trench behind,
In drowsy apathy, and wear
In idle rest that dreadful spear,
As if some wizard spell his dormant pow'rs did bind!

XXXVIII.

" Be whom it may, if Gloster's lance
May rouze the dreamer from his trance,
We will assail him! Trumpets, sound
A gallant challenge! Now let those
Who hate, when foes are nigh, to doze,
With Gloster leap yon trenched ground!"
Wild wakes the conflict! Not a man

Who hears the summons, waits to scan
The gulph before him yawning deep,
Each spurs his charger to the leap,
While "Gloster! Gloster!" sweeps the clouds,
And animates the martial crowds!
Still Beaufort, like the flinty shore,
Deaf to the rude wave's threat'ning roar,
Inflexible the shock of rushing thousands bore!

XXXIX.

But dearly Gloster's squadrons paid
The forfeit of their desperate deed,
For many a man, and many a steed
Check'd in their blind, unbridled speed,
Within the gulph is laid!
Those who the dang'rous chasm pass'd
Are flung with fatal, headlong haste
On Beaufort's lances, and their foe
Sees hundreds drop without a blow!
Rebounding from the iron wall,
Stunn'd and repuls'd, they backward fall;
While some the cold life-drinking steel

Within their glowing bosoms feel,
At once to death's dark regions hurl'd,
With scarcely time to groan their farewel to the world!

XL.

The clashing of the meeting hosts,
The dying shrieks, the victors' boasts,
The whizzing spears, the bowstring's twang,
The heavy, loud, resounding clang
Of armour ringing on the ground,
Of iron strokes the frequent sound,
All spoke at once!—Yet yon red heap,
Yon mangled, gore-besprinkled mound,
Doth mid the dreadful hurly sleep!
Ah! even now, their eyes were bright,
Their breasts were heaving, and each tongue
With taunts defied the hostile throng
To grapple with their boasted might!
Now trampled o'er by friends and foes,
No insult breaks their meek repose!

XLI.

Repuls'd and baffled, Gloster's host
Full dearly rue their leader's boast;
A broken crowd by shame uncheck'd
Regardless of their honour's loss,
Again the fatal gulph they cross
Where many a gallant form lies wreck'd!
As by the whirlwind swept along,
E'en Gloster grac'd the flying throng,
The vaunting Richard!—Beaufort's breast
With pride almost to bursting swell'd,
When his exulting eyes beheld
The haughty boaster's well-known crest,
Conspicuous in disgrace, receding with the rest!

XLII.

"Now, now!" he cried, "my valiant friends,
Does heaven vouchsafe us proud amends!
Oh! by St. George, the wide world o'er
Shall Beaufort hunt the Bristled Boar!
Come, merry hunters! Let's pursue!
Wind horns! and lift the blythe halloo!"

XLIII.

When Beaufort in his charger's side
Did plunge his golden spur,
Fate from the clouds look'd down and cried
'Tis o'er with Lancaster!
Insidious Richard!—as he fled,
Anxious he turn'd his plotting head,
And laugh'd to see proud Somerset
Entangling in the well-spun net!
His brother king, dismay'd, beheld
His scatter'd van in shameful flight,
Scudding like deer across the field,
The hunter-band in sight;
As Gloster heard his rallying shout
And saw his pow'rs prepar'd to move,
" All's well!" he cried. " Dismiss thy doubt!
Stir not! Hold firm thy steely grove!
Farewel! Farewel! Our seeming shame
Ere night shall brighten into fame,
And burn upon our crest a never-dying flame!"

XLIV.

So fast he rode, his barded horse
With foam bedew'd the arduous track,
While Beaufort's wild, impetuous course
Drave like a whirlwind on his back,
And much the thinn'd and wasted rear
Deplor'd the Hero's stern career!
Even so, October's stormy wrath
The trembling grove relentless sweeps,
Drifting the leaves in mournful heaps
Along the forest-path!

XLV.

Oh Beaufort!—What a fatal cloud
Is rolling o'er thy radiant morn!
Lo! smother'd in a vapoury shroud,
Thy sun declines,—its beams are shorn!
Repent not now!—Thy race is run!
Alas! alas! thou art undone!

XLVI.

As on he sped with fury blind,
A ghastly murmur from behind
His ear assail'd ;—rouz'd by the sound,
He curb'd his steed and gaz'd around,—
Then all beneath his aventayle
His glowing cheek turn'd deadly pale,
And if, within a heart so bold,
Despair e'er breath'd his whisper cold,
'Twas then his chilling tale to Somerset he told !

XLVII.

When the wild waters in their wrath
Fierce bursting from the ruin'd mound,
Come whelming on with sullen sound,
And close around the trav'ller's path,
Where'er he turns, destruction's roar
Stuns his bewilder'd sense ; the wave
Behind o'ertakes him, and before
Swells in his sight the gulphy grave!
Speechless, he views death's hideous shape
Nor dreams of refuge or escape!

'Twas thus with Beaufort!—Round him close,
File after file, his wily foes,
And Gloster, from his feign'd disgrace,
Now turns the noble prey to face!
Fast, fast, the ruthless battle-storm
Beats thick on Beaufort's dauntless form!
In vain, his faithful followers try
To ward from him th' impending wound,
Like snow-flakes from December's sky
They drop their hapless chief around,
And soon, the Lion of the field
Must vail his lofty crest, by countless numbers quell'd!

XLVIII.

When youthful Lancaster espied
Of Gloster's men the hasty flight,
While Beaufort, with victorious might
Roll'd on their rear a whelming tide,
Elate, and eager to combine
His forces with the vaward line,
With kindling heart, and glowing face
He rouz'd his squadrons to the chase,

And on he dash'd, mistrusting nought,
For conquest brighten'd every thought!
Already o'er the trench he flies
And halts, his glitt'ring line to form,
And not till then, his soul descries
The coming of the storm!

XLIX.

Unhappy Prince! he little guess'd
How few his gallant call obey'd,
But now, within his freezing breast
He feels he is betray'd!
No prouder train his steps attend,
Than if, his Falcon's wing to try,
Or wake the echoing woodland cry
In careless sport he forth did wend;
The rest were traitors; mute and cold,
By Wenlock poison'd, they behold
In sullen apathy the course
Which bears with such resistless force
On ruin's rugged rocks, their leader, young and bold!

L.

What might he do? Should he return
False Wenlock to revile and spurn,
And try if yet the traitor-throng,
Repentant, will amend their wrong?
Alas! he could not! for the space
Brave Beaufort's troops erewhile had held,
Is now by hostile thousands fill'd,
Who, shouting, leave their lurking place,
The covert of the woodland shade,
Where long their crouching ambush laid:
" Well!" cried the Prince, " we'll on! the brand
Must carve us out a bloody way!
If one of Beaufort's valiant band
Still lifts his eye to yonder ray,
We'll seek him out, and with him share
A glorious end, the prize which crowns disastrous war!"

LI.

Resolv'd and desp'rate, side by side
The little band of heroes ride
With hearts unshrinking, warm and brave,

As if the red and ghastly grave
Yawn'd not before them! On the foe,
Who wond'ring views their bold advance,
Headlong they drive the shiv'ring lance,
Then, back recoiling from the blow,
To earth their broken spears they throw,
And waving each his brand on high,
To closer, deadlier war, th' admiring hosts defy!

LII.

Alas! the heart that might behold
That hopeless struggle, nor lament
Th' inevitable, dire event
May boast its hard and flinty mould!
Methinks, e'en hatred, keen and stern,
Must on the glorious victims yearn!
Where are they gone,—the gallant few?
Alas! the gory earth they strew!
The souls which lit their cold remains
Are fled to yonder azure plains!
Their bodies never fled!—In blood
On that same spot they lie, where late they nobly stood!

LIII.

With them lies Rudolph;—struggling hard
The death-stroke from his Prince to ward,
He reck'd not of the pond'rous blow
That smote his own neglected brow,
It riv'd his morion's steel in twain
And enter'd deep the dizzy brain,
And, backward from his barded horse,
Sank on the earth the grizly corse!
His rough and stubborn love had stood
Between his master's breast and harm,
Long, with a tough and sinewy arm
He beat aside destruction's flood,
And, when he fell, his single fall
Was hail'd by thousands!—So, when long
With arduous strife, th' assailing throng
Have toil'd to shake some bastion tall
With mine unseen, or engine strong,
If yields at length th' embattled wall,
Such shouts exultant rend the skies
When prostrate at their feet the mighty bulwark lies!

LIV.

Now many a voice accordant cried
" Yield, Lancaster! 'tis vain to strive!
Thou art alone! Nor strength nor pride
May aught avail thee,—and alive,
Yea, and uninjur'd if we may,
We swear to bear thee from the fray,
The proudest trophy of the day!"

LV.

" Never!" cried Edward, and his shield
He cast indignant on the field;
" Will not my bleeding ruins sate
Your rebel chief's inveterate hate?
Nay, if 'tis heaven's resistless will,
Come on! th' insulting boast fulfil!
I am alone!—Methinks ye fear
To buy your royal captive dear,
That ye do falter thus!—Come on!
What stays ye, rebels? Do ye quail
An injur'd master to assail?
Fear not, brave multitudes! for Edward is alone!'

LVI.

Some dastard's blow, e'en while he spoke,
Loud on his charger's harness rang,
The poitrinal to shivers broke,
And, starting from the sudden pang,
Regardless of the unfelt rein,
He whirl'd around, and mad with pain
Along the wreck-strewn, slipp'ry plain,
O'er broken weapons, prostrate steeds,
And mangled men, uncheck'd he speeds!
And now the well-known trench is nigh,
But wasted veins and failing strength
Oppose the headlong race at length,
And in the crimson gulph both horse and rider lie!

LVII.

Steep'd in the gore of friends and foes,
The hapless Prince forgot his woes,
His sense was stunn'd, but still unquaff'd
The dregs remain of sorrow's draught,
Still does the nauseous cup contain
Some deadly drops of grief and pain,

And he *must* drink them!—Murmur not,
Nor marvel at his ruthless lot,
Nor call the doom of heaven unjust,
Ye erring children of the dust!
Submit, and question not!—for ne'er,
This nether world of conflict rude,
Of frailty and vicissitude,
Of virtue's triumphs is the sphere!
Why should we envy vice, her short-liv'd trophies here?

LVIII.

Oh! never till the heart is cold
Does hope relax her stubborn hold!
With life she lights the mutual fire,
And, but with life, does hope expire!
Yet for awhile her task is done,
The struggle's o'er, the battle's won!
Indifferent to her promises,
The conqu'ror but the present sees;
The vanquish'd need her not,—her tale
With them no longer may avail,
For them 'tis finish'd. They have found

A friend who flatters not, whose breath
Of no false promise bears the sound,
No soothing smiler he!—man's true deliverer—Death!

LIX.

The brave are fallen! Shall we weep
To see their still and frozen sleep?
And would we wake them to begin
Anew the race of strife and sin?
This morning saw the blooming throng,
Presumptuous, fiery, rash and strong,
Keen for the battle!—Short and bright,
And brittle is the hero's thread!
Lo! all his ardour and his might,
His glory and his pomp are fled!
Yet who shall sorrow o'er the grave
Of those who fell, as fall the brave?

LX.

At last the conqu'ror's wasteful hand
Blood-sated rests the vengeful brand;
But let no dream of mercy mock

The sad survivors of the war,—
The sharpen'd axe, the sable block,
Claim from the sword their wonted share!
A bitter task their strength must try,
To look on death with pausing eye,
With cold, yet settled heart to wait
The lingering stroke of certain fate!
A sterner, soberer courage now
Must aid them than the kindling glow
Which bore them thro' the conflict rude,—
The silent force of fortitude!

LXI.

The wretched Edward opes again
His eye-lids on a world of pain,
Officious care the unwilling sense
Awakens from its kind suspense,
That he may learn how much of woe
Man's nature may endure below!
The spirit, almost fled, by force
Returns to light the pallid corse,
Dragg'd back to prove one struggle more

Ere fate proclaims the conflict o'er,
Back, from eternity to time,
Back, from repose and bliss, to outrage, woe and crime!

LXII.

In Tewksbury's walls triumphant York
Refresh'd him from his bloody work,
While Gloster, Clarence, Hastings, Grey,
Blythe sharers in th' eventful fray,
Boast o'er the perils of the day;
And they have wash'd their crimson hands,
And sheath'd their weary swords, when lo!
In helpless plight before them stands
The battle's crown,—their royal foe!
He, who the princely captive held,
A sordid knight, the slave of gold,
Whose bosom, honourless and cold,
No touch of generous pity swell'd,
To win the dross his soul ador'd
Now basely sells the life his cruel care restor'd!

LXIII.

Alone, defenceless, Edward stood
Encompass'd by those men of blood!
E'en yet a spark of royal pride
Flash'd from his eye, the hectic bloom
Rush'd o'er his features, and defied,
With gallant shew, th' impending doom;
Such mournful, stern, majestic grace
Dwells on the ruin'd prince's face,
That they who hate him, half respect
The virtue by their fury wreck'd!
E'en York deliberates, and surveys
His victim's form with troubled gaze,—
Did he relent? No!—From his breast
He drove in scorn th' intrusive guest,
And thus, in thund'ring voice, his captive foe address'd:

LXIV.

"Who art thou, stripling? What impell'd
Thy puny pride to wake the ire
Which has consum'd thee in its fire?
Who taught thy boyish arm to wield

Rebellion's blade? What frantic rage,
What demon was't, who bade thee dare
With fate the desperate fight to wage,
And brave thy sov'reign to the war?
Kneel, stubborn traitor! and confess
What message from below provok'd thee to transgress!"

LXV.

" Dost thou not know me, York? 'Tis strange
How mem'ry fails with fortune's change!
But I will tell thee,—I am one
To whom thy knee, unbid, should bend;
I came to claim my father's throne,
And my fair birth-right to defend,
And, with God's favour, to chastise
Mine own and England's enemies!
Now thou art answer'd!—and my tongue
Would do its royal office wrong
To parley with thee more! Thou knowest
Full well, usurping York, to whom that place thou owest!"

LXVI.

Nor needed farther to provoke
Of fell revenge the savage stroke;
York rush'd upon the unarm'd youth
And smote him rudely on the mouth
With mailed hand;—that outrage borne,
The rest was easy! Edward's soul,
Rejoicing, from its spoils forlorn,
Escapes to its eternal goal,
And closes, with a thankful sigh,
Life's long and lingering tragedy!

LXVII.

Each noble ruffian claim'd his part
In the brave exploit; none disdain'd
To strike an undefended heart,
Not one did blush to lift his hand
With that inglorious slaughter stain'd!
" Behold," cried Gloster, " overthrown
The mighty barrier, which alone
Arose between thee and a throne!
There lies the Red and thorny Rose

Which did thy royal hopes oppose,
Uprooted like a baleful weed!
God save thy Majesty! for thou art King indeed!"

LXVIII.

Scarce had each tongue, with glad accord,
Re-echoed the exulting word,
Than from without, a parley rude
Does on their wond'ring ears intrude:
York shudder'd,—e'en his callous breast
Trembled to meet th' unwelcome guest
Whose voice claim'd entrance! It was she,
She who *was* Queen of England!—late
The people's gaze, the voice of fate,
To whom the loftiest bent his knee!
A fond, fallacious hope had led
The mother's frantic footsteps thither,—
She look'd upon the weapons red,
She guess'd what blood their points had shed,
And felt that fond hope wither!

LXIX.

"Then ye have done the deed!" she said:
"I come too late!—Ye might have staid
One moment longer! I would fain
Have kiss'd my living son again,
And whisper'd somewhat in his ear
Ere he began th' unknown career
On which ye sent him!—Hark ye, Lords!
I long to feel those reeking swords!
In mercy kill me! Will ye not?
Ye sons of York, have ye forgot
How many a deep and bitter debt
Ye owe the hated Margaret?
Where is my child? Mine only one!
Oh, God! Oh, God! Is this my son?

LXX.

"Cold, cold and pale!—Some flatt'rer said
That heav'n still guards the holy head!
Why this grim heap did late contain
A soul which never crime did stain,
Pure, gentle, innocent!—And yet

Your swords are with his life-blood wet,
And heaven the while look'd smiling on
Nor aim'd its thunderbolts, when the black deed was done!

LXXI.

" Monsters! A mother's curse lie strong
And heavy on you ! May the tongue,
The ceaseless tongue which well I ween
Lives in the murd'rer's murky breast,
With goading whispers, fell and keen,
Make havoc of your rest!
Forever in your midnight dream
May the wan, wintry smile, which stays
On yon cold lips, appal your gaze,
And may a madden'd mother's scream
Ring in your ears, till ye awake
And ev'ry unstrung limb with horror's palsy shake !"

LXXII.

An impulse like the grasp of death
Now hardly held her gasping breath !

Dire was the conflict! Mute she stood,
Striving, and fain to utter more,
Her writhing features struggled sore
With black convulsion; till the blood
Burst from her lips, a ghastly flood,
Then, Nature gave the combat o'er,
And the heart-stricken Queen fell senseless on the floor!

END OF THE POEM.

NOTE TO CANTO THE TENTH.

Fair Tewkbury's hoary tow'rs at last.—Stanza III. l. 3.

On the 4th of May, 1471, twenty days after the battle of Barnet, was fought the yet more decisive one of Tewksbury.—The Queen with Prince Edward had landed on Easter day at Weymouth, and having from thence proceeded to Beaulieu Abbey in the New Forest, Hants, where they rested, they there received the overwhelming intelligence of the defeat and death of both the Nevils.—Still preserved from despair by the zeal of their adherents, especially of Edmund, Duke of Somerset, the great prop of their cause, they retreated through Devonshire and Somersetshire, to the city of Bristol, their power accumulating on their march; they proposed joining Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, in Wales, but having proceeded to Gloster, and there meeting with repulse and insult, they marched forward to Tewksbury, where they intended to cross the Severn. King Edward, with his brothers Clarence and Gloster, followed them closely, and in this emergency, Margaret called a council of war, when the impetuosity of Somerset prevailing over cooler opinions, they drew up in order of battle on a slope near the town, in face of the enemy the first line, or van, being commanded by the rash and gallant Beaufort, the second by the Prince and Lord Wenlock, and the third by the Earl of Devon. The Lancastrian camp was surrounded by a deep trench which presented a consi-

derable obstacle to the assailants who had likewise formed their battle in three lines, the first led by Richard, Duke of Gloster, the second by the King and Clarence, and the rear by the Lord Hastings.—The crafty Gloster took advantage of the impetuous temper of Somerset, whom by a pretented flight he decoyed from his entrenchments, and by this skilful manœuvre of the enemy was this last and desperate effort of the Lancastrians brought to a most disastrous and melancholy issue.—See *Rudder's Glostershire*, page 735; *Hutton's Bosworth Field*, page 36; and *Hall's Chronicle*.

When Prince Edward was brought into the presence of his Conqueror, being, says Hall, "a goodly, femenine, and a well feautered yonge gentelman," the King demanded of him, "how he durst so presumptuously enter into his realme with banners displayed.' The Prince, beyng bold of stomacke and of a good courage, answered, sayinge: 'To recover my father's kyngdome and enheritage, from his father and grandfather to him, and from him after him to me lyneally divoluted.' At which wordes Kyng Edward sayd nothing, but with his hand thrust him from him, or as some say, stroke him with his gauntlet, whom incontinent they that stode about, which were George, Duke of Clarence, Rychard, Duke of Gloster, the Marquess of Dorset, and the Lord Hastyngs, sodaynly murthered and piteously manquelled. The bitternesse of which murder some of the actors * after in their latter days tasted.'—*Hall's Chronicle*, page 301.

* Each of them, the King excepted, met an untimely and tragical end.

FINIS.

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